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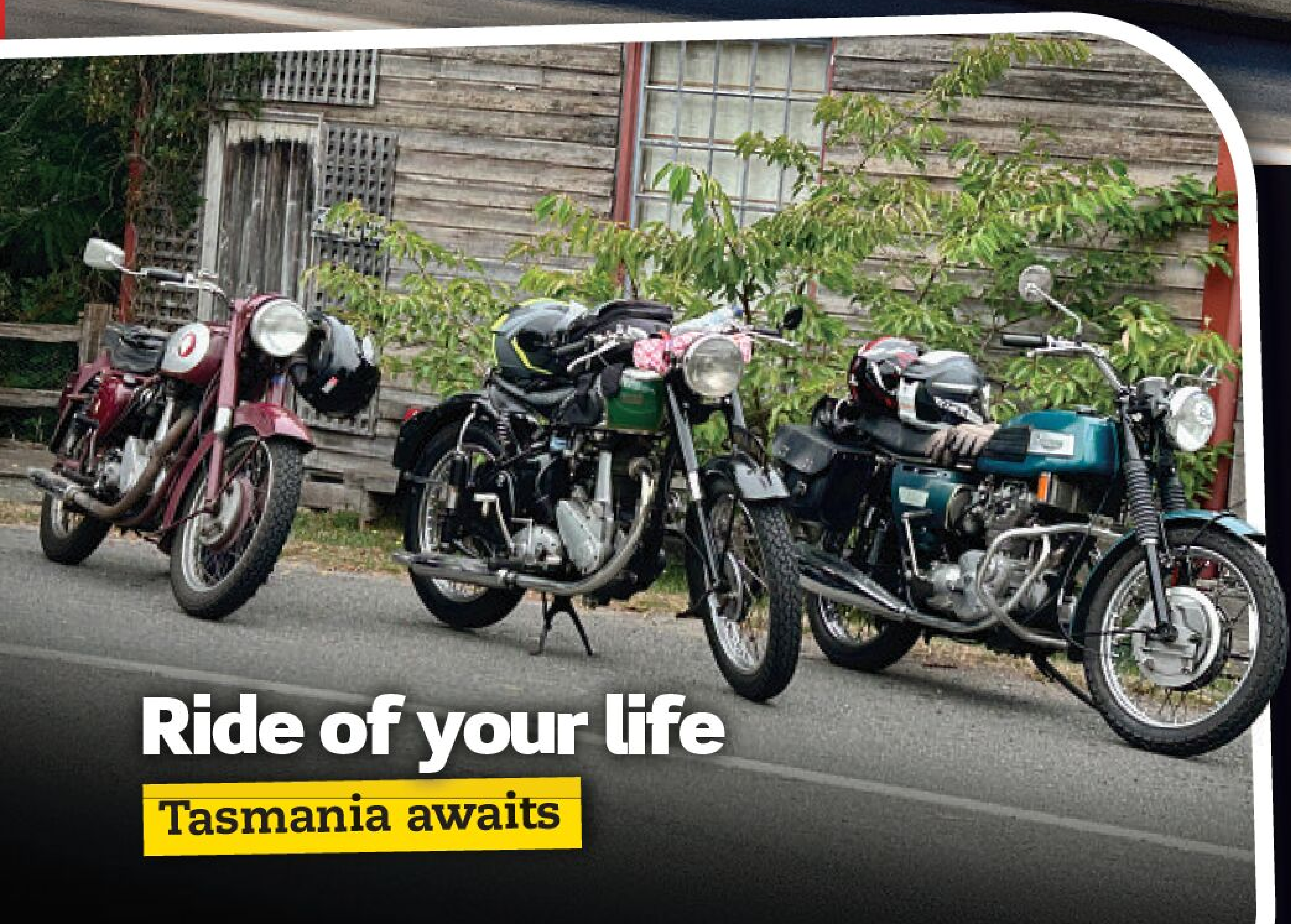

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## Making cables
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## Barn find Norton!
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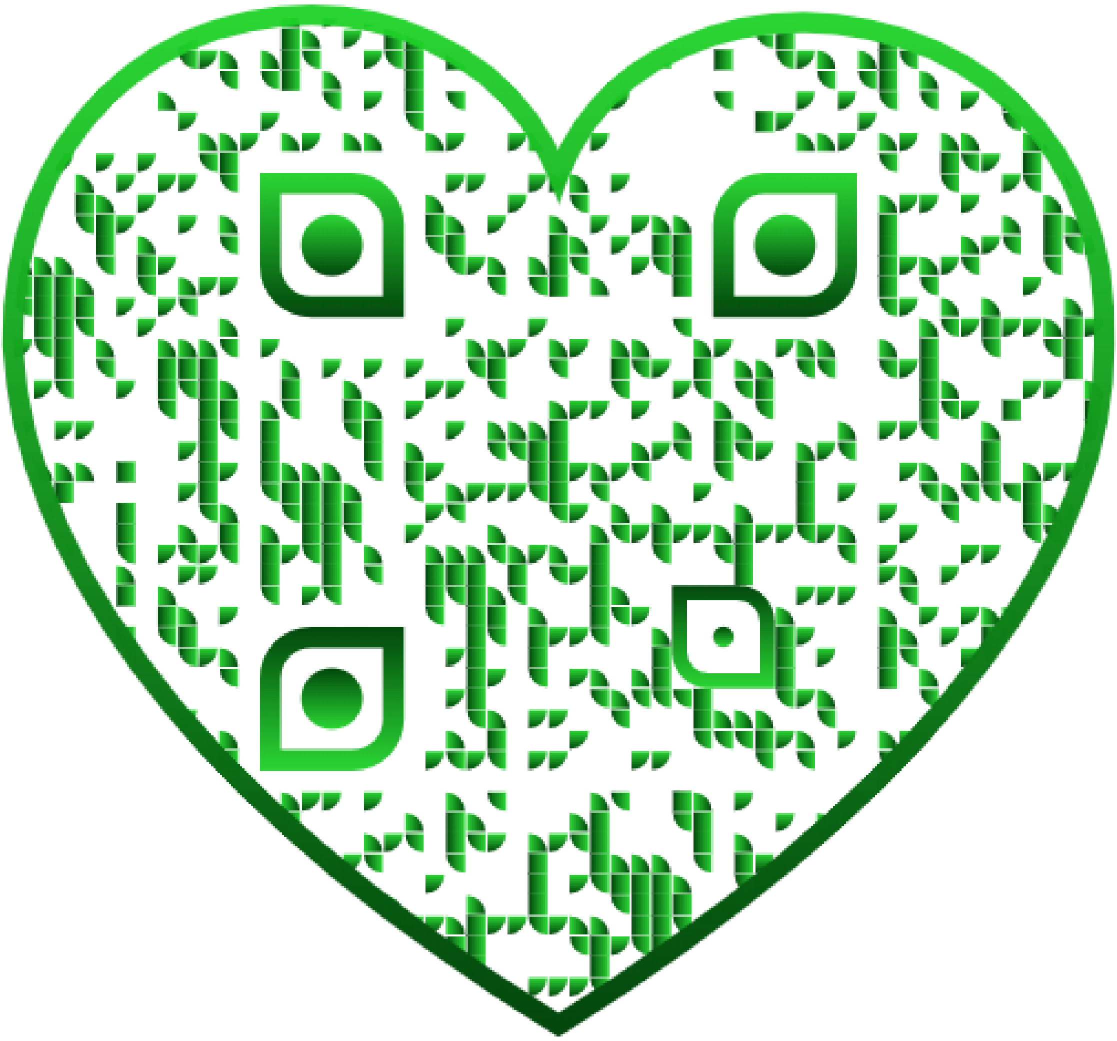

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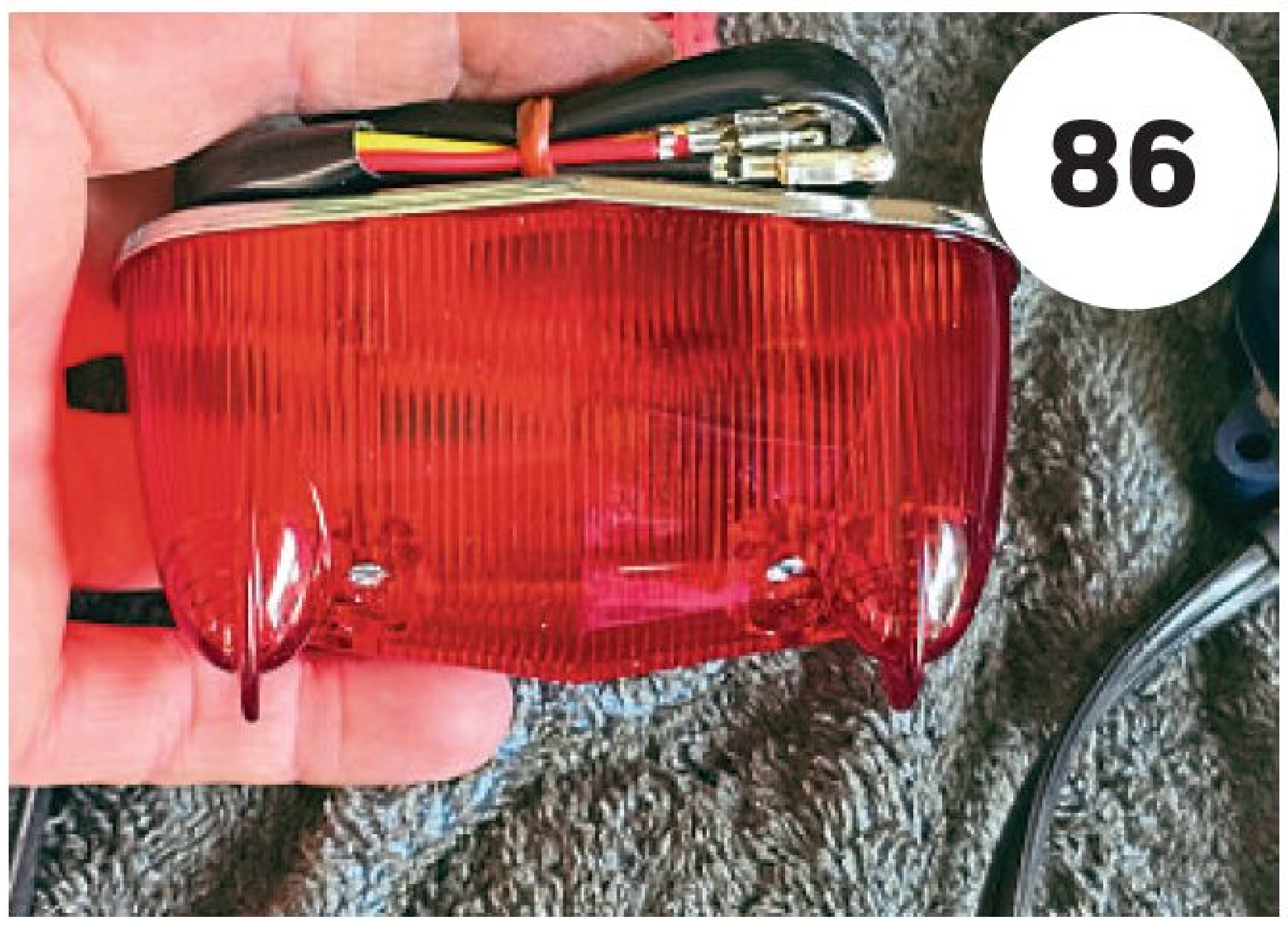

BARRY SHEENE
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# Full swing!

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**May your diary be filled with** riding and your lawn not need mowing. For it is zero hour, when months of waiting and weather-whinging turns into doubled-up diary dates!

We started with our neighbours firing up the Garrett and Savage tractors for a jolly in prep for that world's events coming up – a wonderful sound, sight, and smell. Garretts were built down in Suffolk, while Savages came from King's Lynn – though this one has just been built! An incredible feat.

The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride is covered elsewhere on page 32 but is always a nice meet-up with friends and ours started with pub breakfast – what better way. This is preferable to the other day… catching up with the TT Superstock race while having a little lunch in the garden, one of our chickens exercised its lightning ninja skills to have my food away! Still, despite livestock and the weather, the TT is one of the highlights of the year for many. The Isle of Man is an incredible place, and Maria has just applied to be a marshal for the Manx next year. Which means I need to…

I have found space – the CZ is no longer residing at CBG towers. I would never have finished it and felt guilty seeing it under sheets. Engineer and AJS CSR owner Johnny used to own it and has (a little) time on his hands, so he has taken the 175 to sprinkle some love on it, and we'll hopefully see it rolling very soon. I can't wait – and thanks, Johnny!

Talking of behind the curtain, this MZ 251 caught my eye recently, with a chopper frame, expansion chamber and lots of little details – it looked superb. But as it left, my eyes were seeing a chop, yet my ears were looking for a two-stroke. Easily confused…

Lastly, Maria has a new bike, a glorious Aprilia RS660. It's perfect for anyone not 6ft tall, and yet it has plenty of go and handling. It makes a great antidote to her Tribsa, Fireblade, CL and others. It had to go for a 600-mile first service and madam rocked up on 597 – all carefully planned. Special mention must go to the local Aprilia dealer, Mototechniks in Stowmarket. A more friendly, honest dealership we could not have found. Passionate and knowledgeable, they show the way all dealers must go to keep loyal customers and consequently survive in these 'challenging' times.

And don't forget to let us know about any workshops you know happy to work on old bikes – we're happy to put them into our directory in the magazine.

Have fun,

Matt

**Matt Hull**
■ **editor@classicbikeguide.com**

# From the hands of a genius to the arms of a legend

Few elements in racing bring spine-tingling stories like the road racing world. Comebacks like Mike Hailwood after his 10-year hiatus, on a Ducati which few thought would finish (it actually broke going over the finish line)… Joey Dunlop winning the Senior in 2000 on a Honda, when many had written him off another 'big bike' win… and the one that gets me, when Michael Dunlop won the 250 race at the North West 200 in 2008, after being told not to race and being smuggled onto the start line having witnessed the tragic death of his father in the Thursday race, just two days earlier. Hollywood scripts couldn't get close to the emotion of that one – and they've tried.

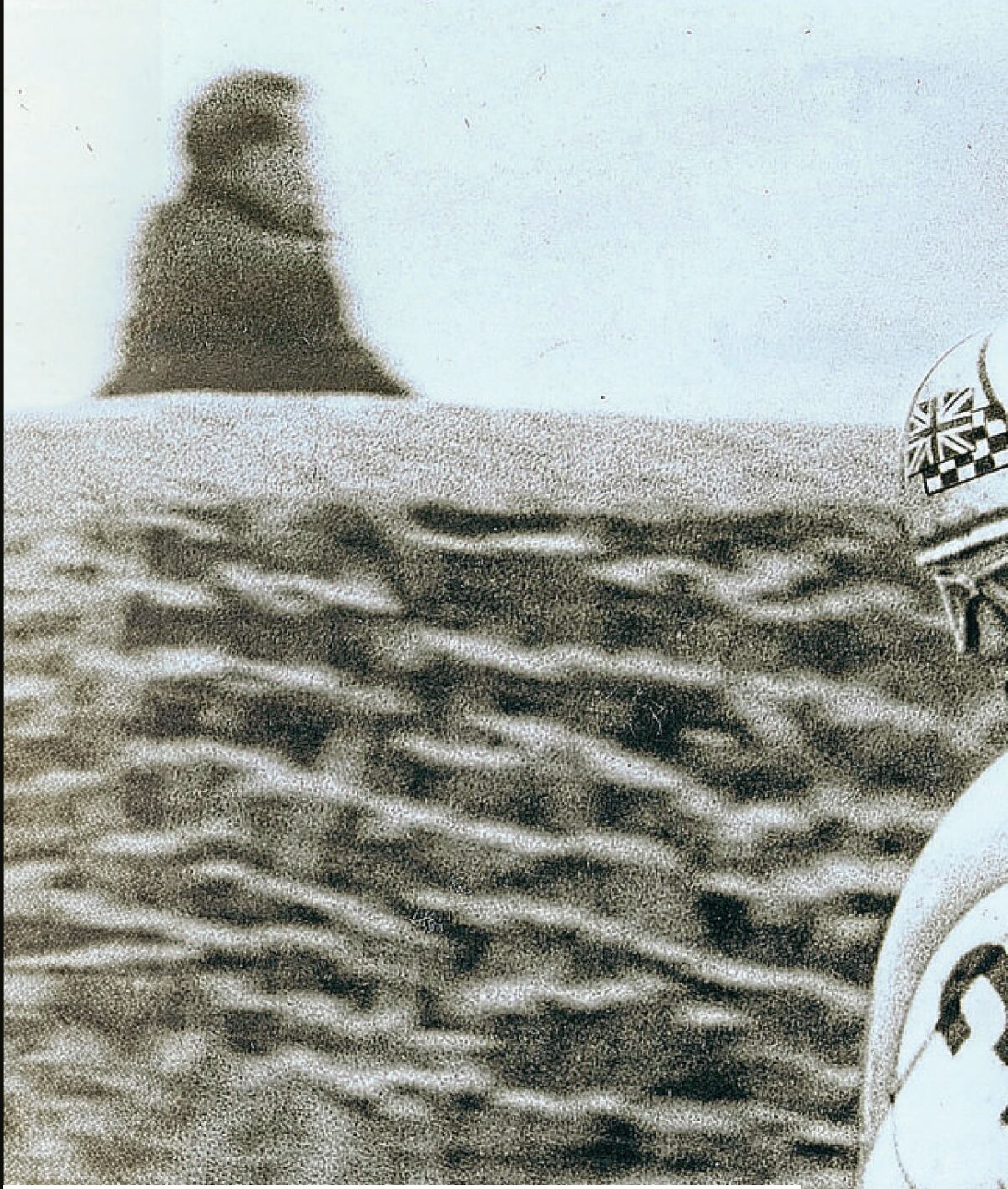
Let's take a look at this great story. In 1961, Mike Hailwood was the up-and-coming racer. There was a real buzz around this youngster, and he signed for Honda that year. Mike grasped his first TT win earlier in the week on the young Japanese firm's Lightweight 125 entry. He also won the Lightweight 250 TT on a Honda 250, but the firm had no 500 to contest the Senior. So, Hailwood's dad, Stan, a huge force in his son's progress, needed a competitive ride. The previous six Senior races had been won by multi-cylinder Italian bikes, but aside from Gary Hocking being allowed one as a backdoor-factory presence, they were impossible to get, and Honda would not be happy. So, Stan needed a Manx Norton – a fast one.

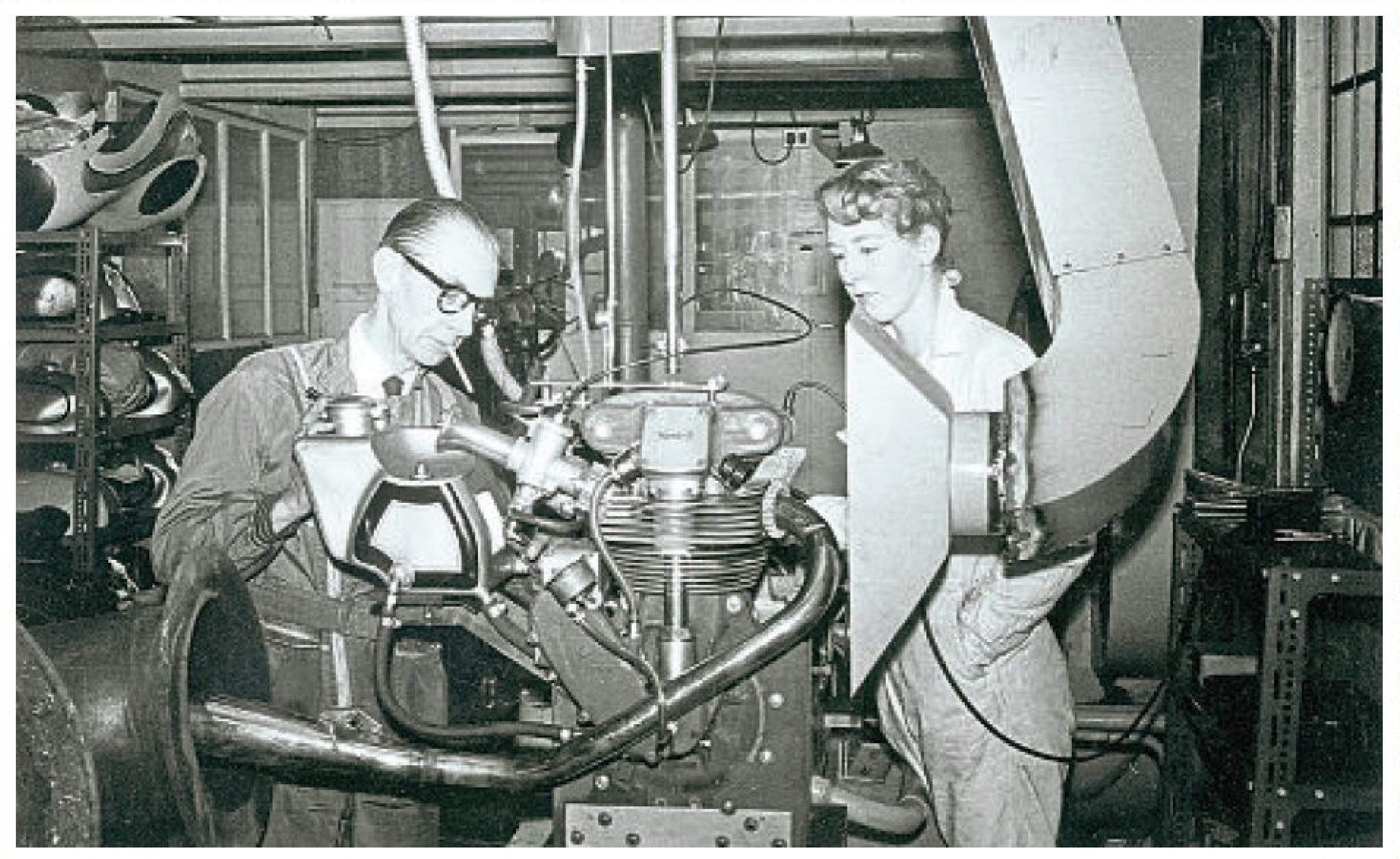
But there was only one person Stan Hailwood trusted to build Mike a fast bike – ex-racer and speed record holder turned tuner Bill Lacey. Stan had fallen out with Bill over Bill's daughter, Ann, courting one of Mike's rivals, but Stan never took no for an answer and submitted to all Bill's requests – no questions over cost, it wouldn't be his, and to leave him until it was done.

A brand-new engine was picked up from Norton works, stripped, and fitted with a one-piece crankshaft, plain bearings and, allegedly, a Jaguar D-Type con rod, better oil pump and forged piston, allowing 8000rpm. An average Manx was 50bhp; Lacey's was closer to 66bhp on his own dyno.

Come race day, the MV Agusta of Rhodesian Hocking was leading but had to withdraw with throttle issues. There were 45 Nortons that started the race, and all three podium places bared the Bracebridge street name. But it had to be Hailwood on that top step, his first Senior win. It was also the last time a single-cylinder won the Blue Ribband class against newer multi-cylinder machines, and the last Norton win until Hislop in 1992.

And that engine? Word is Lacey took it out of the bike and buried it. CBG





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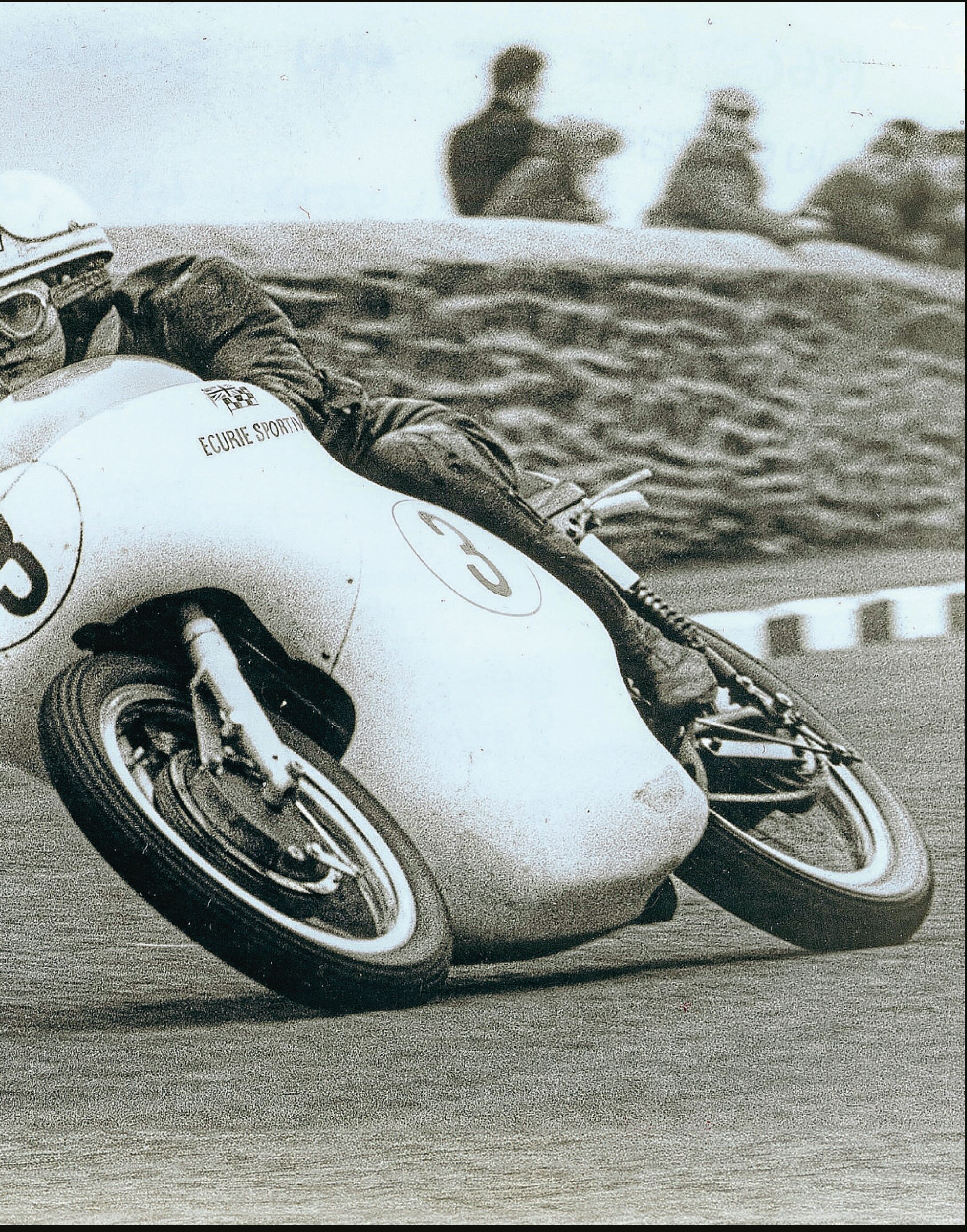
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03/12/23

## TOUR OF TASSIE:

# Old bikes' best-kept secret

Alan Cathcart thinly disguises a once-in-a-lifetime classic tour of Tasmania as work!

**Words and galivanting by** Alan Cathcart, with **photography by** AC Archives and Jim Scaysbrook

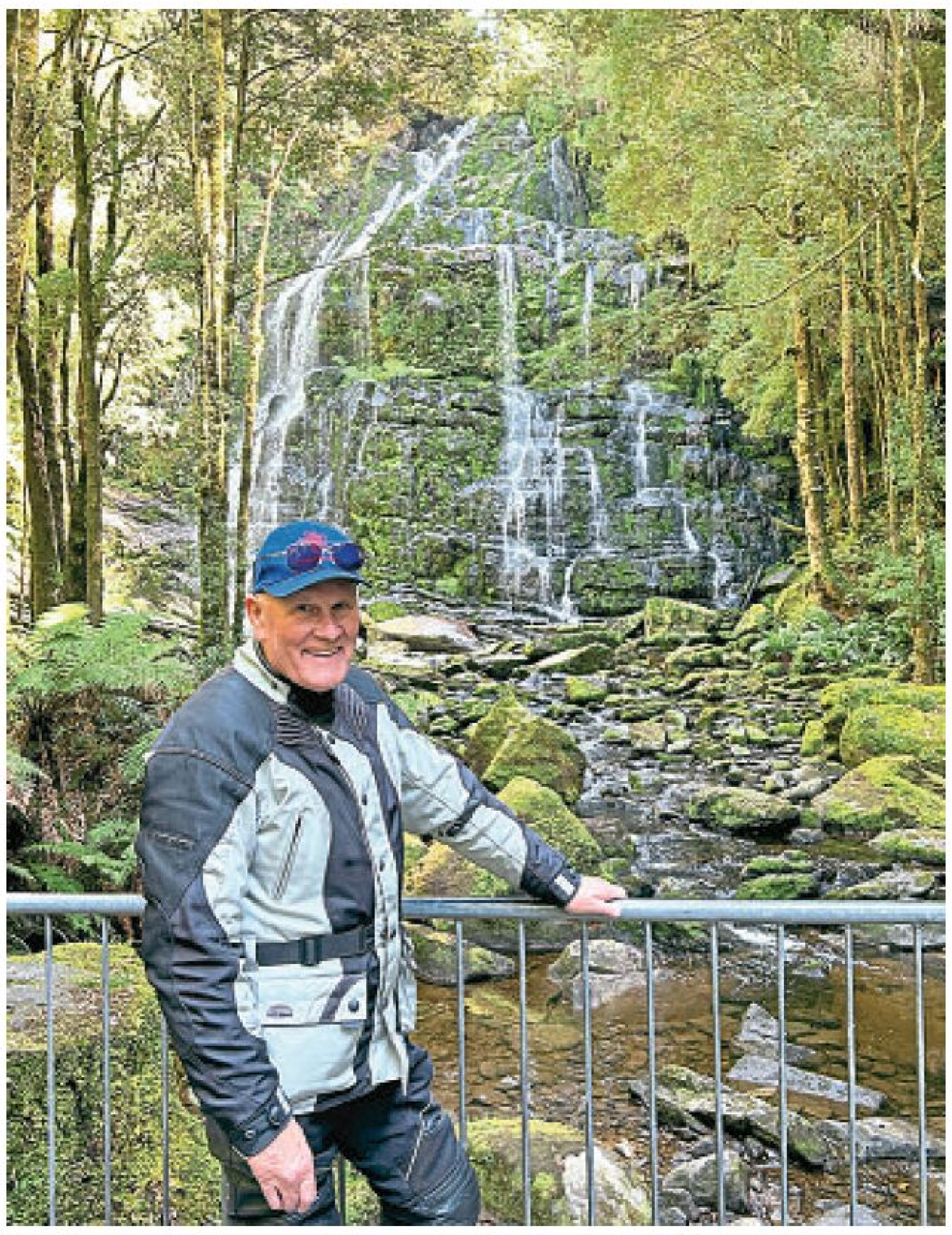
Poatina 42
B51 Cressy 64
Longford 73
(Arthurs Lake) 12
A5 Bothwell 46
Melton Mowbray 66
yingina / Great Lake 16
A5 Miena 16
Deloraine 83
HIGHLAND LAKES
GREAT LAKE COMMUNITY CENTRE
BINGO
16TH MAR
6.30PM
JACKPOT
153

> **"Tasmania is half the size of England, yet with 576,000 inhabitants has just 1% of our population, meaning there's lots of room for living your life..."**

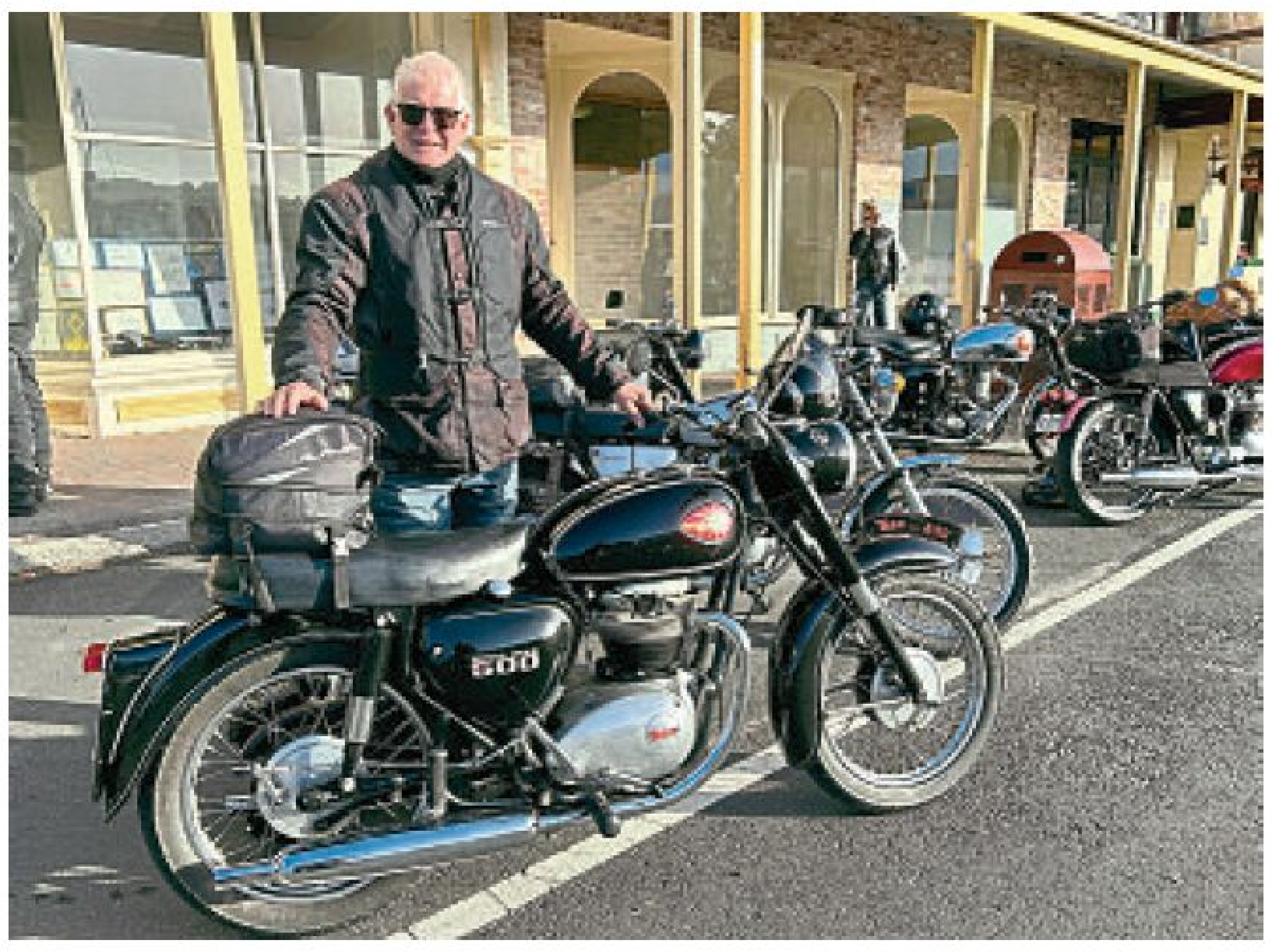
THIS COULD POSSIBLY BE THE BEST-kept secret in the world of old bikes. It is an event which takes place every two years in Australia, restricted to just 120 riders and their machines, which must have been built before 1970. Ten days of riding, with optional day trips interspersed with a couple of rest days for vehicle maintenance, sightseeing or simply socializing – which entails riding 1500 miles on near-deserted, well-paved roads through some of the most scenic and diverse countryside on the planet. It used to be held every three years, given that the organisers arrange it all in their spare time. But in response to popular demand, as they say, their recovery time was cut back to two years from the 2020 event onwards.

This event is so consistently well-supported that the 120 places for the seventh staging of the rally, held last year, were all spoken for and the AUS $350 entry fee paid within 41 minutes of the moment that online registration opened up one year in advance, leaving several would-be returnees disappointed.

We are talking about the Tour of Tassie, or for those unfamiliar with Aussie abbreviation, one lap of the island state of Tasmania, aka the Apple Isle – look at a map to see why, though some people reckon its heart-shaped. But the massive fruit orchards planted by British settlers in the 19th century that became a staple



AC at Nelson Falls

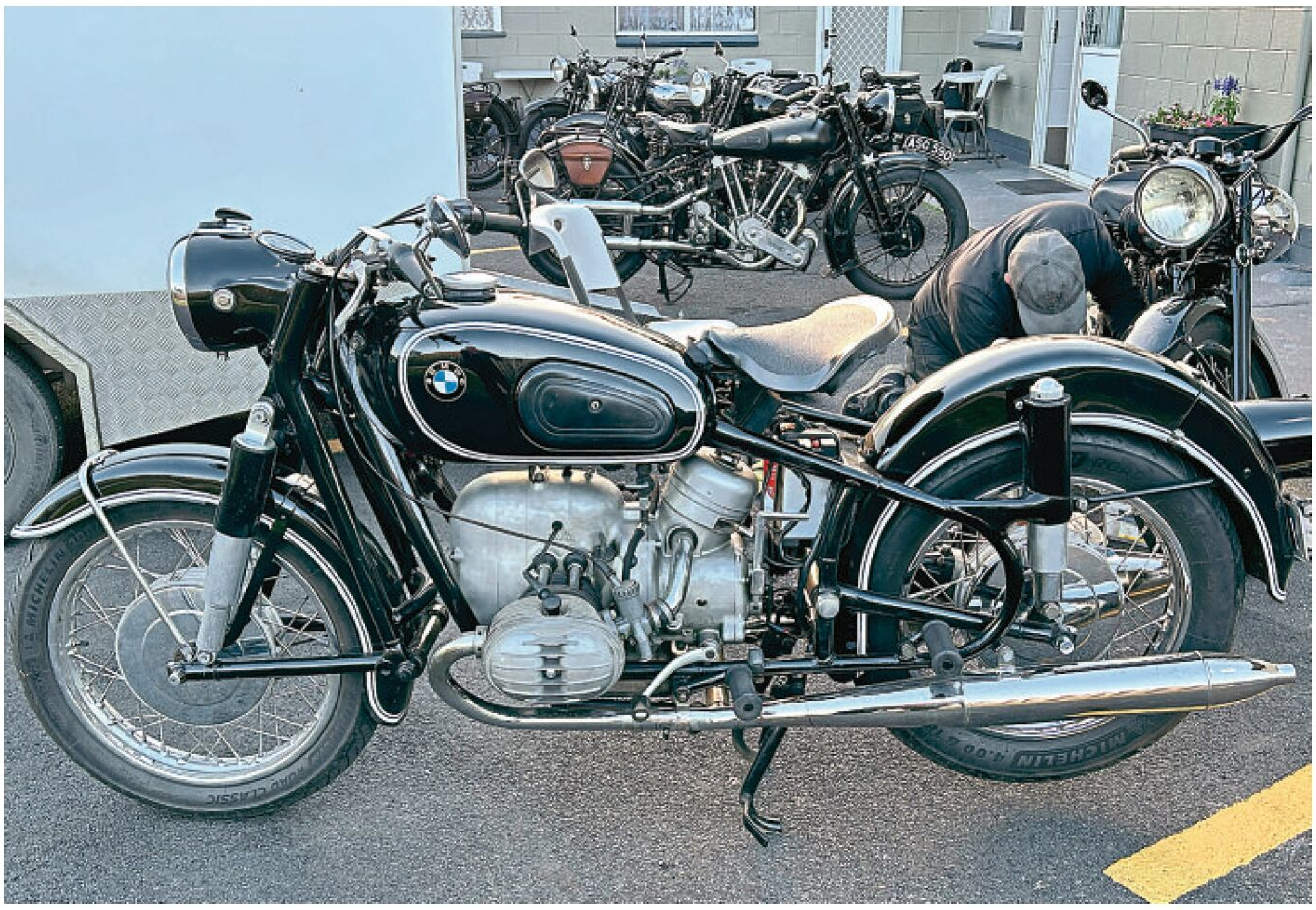


Anthony Smeekes' 1964 BSA A50 Royal Star

Peter Bender's amazing collection

The Bender museum

Bill Overeem changing plug on his Vincent Comet



Bowe Wilson's 1940 BMW R66 600cc

ingredient in the island's economic growth were just the start of Australia's smallest and most southerly state's agricultural development, which meant its countryside was swiftly settled and farmed. Located 240km (150 miles) due south of Melbourne across the Bass Straight, Tasmania is half the size of England, yet with 576,000 inhabitants has just 1% of our population, meaning there's lots of room for living your life, even if 45% of them do live in and around the capital of Hobart.

I've been visiting Australia regularly for the past 50 years. With a growing number of relatives there, such visits have grown longer and more frequent, yet I'd never been to Tasmania until I was invited to be the guest of honour on last year's Tour of Tassie. This included being loaned a bike by generous local enthusiast Peter Bender, the now-retired former owner of a large aquacultural business farming salmon, which he sold to spend more time with his superb collection of about 60 classic British motorcycles. Given the tour's strictly enforced 1970 cut-off for entries, the 1969 first-series BSA Rocket 3 that Peter chose for me to ride could not have been better suited to the trip – especially since it came with that all-important accessory, an electric start conversion!

In fact, with 28 entries, BSAs were the most numerous marque among the 117 starters – three last-minute cancellations couldn't be replaced. Next were Nortons with 18, followed by 15 Triumphs, and then 13 Vincents, including a pair of Comet singles. Given that the event was organised under the aegis of the British Motorcycle Club of Tasmania, it was perhaps inevitable that such brands predominated, but there were also several BMWs, Indians and Harleys along for the ride, and two Nimbuses (Nimbi?), albeit a mere trio of Italian bikes – one Moto Guzzi, a Ducati and Jordan Piovesana's lovely Gilera Saturno, which sadly expired early on after completing the rally two years before.

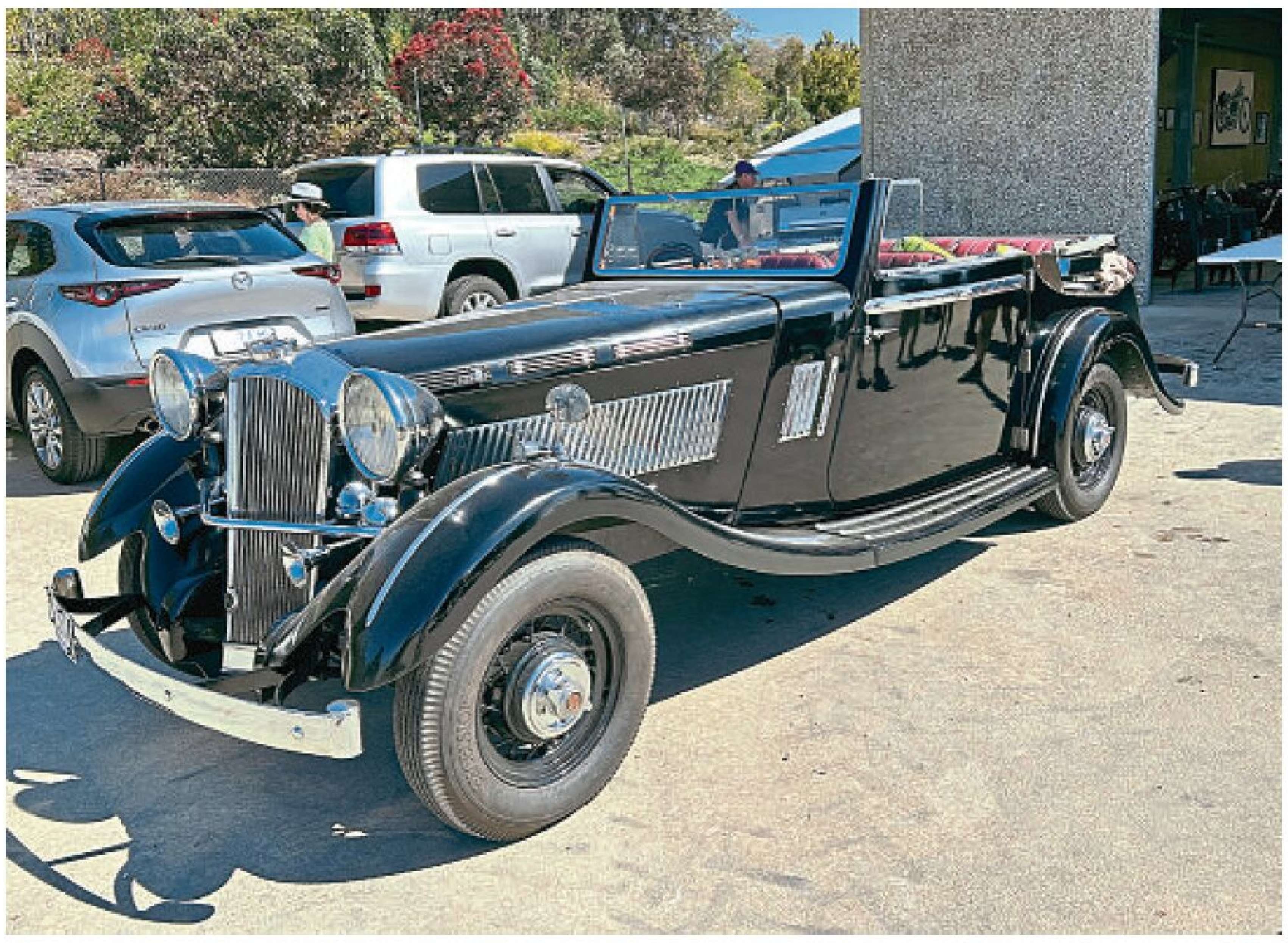
There were, rather strangely, no '60s Hondas, but three Japanese two-strokes took part – one YR1 Yamaha and a pair of Suzukis, with Stephen Cowburn's immaculate T500 Titan first registered on December 1, 1969, just squeaking in on eligibility by 31 days! The oldest machine on the entry list

➡

Brian Davis' 1962 Triumph Trophy TR6 expired on day three

British trio – Sunbeam, BSA & Triumph

Brough contingent at lunch at Weldborough Hotel



Brough Superior car!

BSA Gold Stars times two

Craig Clark's 1973 Moto Guzzi 850 Eldorado

Franc Trento's 1953 Vincent Black Shadow

was the 1926 Norton Model 18 belonging to Brendon McKay, one of nine riders wearing light blue WA tunics, who'd made the arduous 8000km round trip from Western Australia across the Nullabor to take part. After some mechanical issues resolved by the loan of new gearbox internals for the 98-year-old bike – which local enthusiast Howard Burrows just happened to have on the shelf, as you do, in Australia's remote island state – Brendon's Norton ran strongly to the end. The overall reliability factor was remarkable and spoke volumes for the attention participants had paid to bike preparation for the 2400km ride. Just three of the 117 entries suffered terminal mechanical illness, the Gilera, a BSA and a Triumph, and had to be collected by the sweep-up truck – a first-rate record considering how many bikes in action were the wrong side of 75 years old.

Measuring about 200 miles top to bottom and side to side, Tassie has lots of room for riding, as well as a huge variety of scenery, and the tour route takes maximum advantage of that. It starts each time in Ulverstone, on the north coast of the island just 10 miles from the Devonport ferry terminal, where the 9½-hour boat ride from Victoria across the Bass Straight  docks; those who wanted to leave their vans or trailers behind could do so safely. But it also meant that anyone living in Hobart had to take the long 185-mile ride north to make the start –including me, on the Bender Beeza. Still, it was a good chance to get dialled in to local conditions… and to learn that Peter doesn't like to hang about on his 1937 Brough Superior, with a rare Bentley & Draper sprung frame, breezing past aquamarine-tinted lakes lining the fast, open roads of the Central Highlands at 60-65mph, at the head of a slightly improbable flotilla of exotica being ridden in a manner that Lawrence of Arabia would surely have approved of.

This preface to the rally proper set the scene for a near-idyllic fortnight,

Martin Robinson's 1956 AJS Model 30 600cc twin

Barrington
C134 Nowhere Else 3
West Kentish 9

Nowhere Else is a village!

Jordan Piovesana's 1950 Gilera Saturno

Russell Lockwood and his rare 1935 Triumph 6

Peter Birthisel with his Vindian recreation

Owner Peter Bender

Rally Secretary Chris Owens before a Sheffield mural

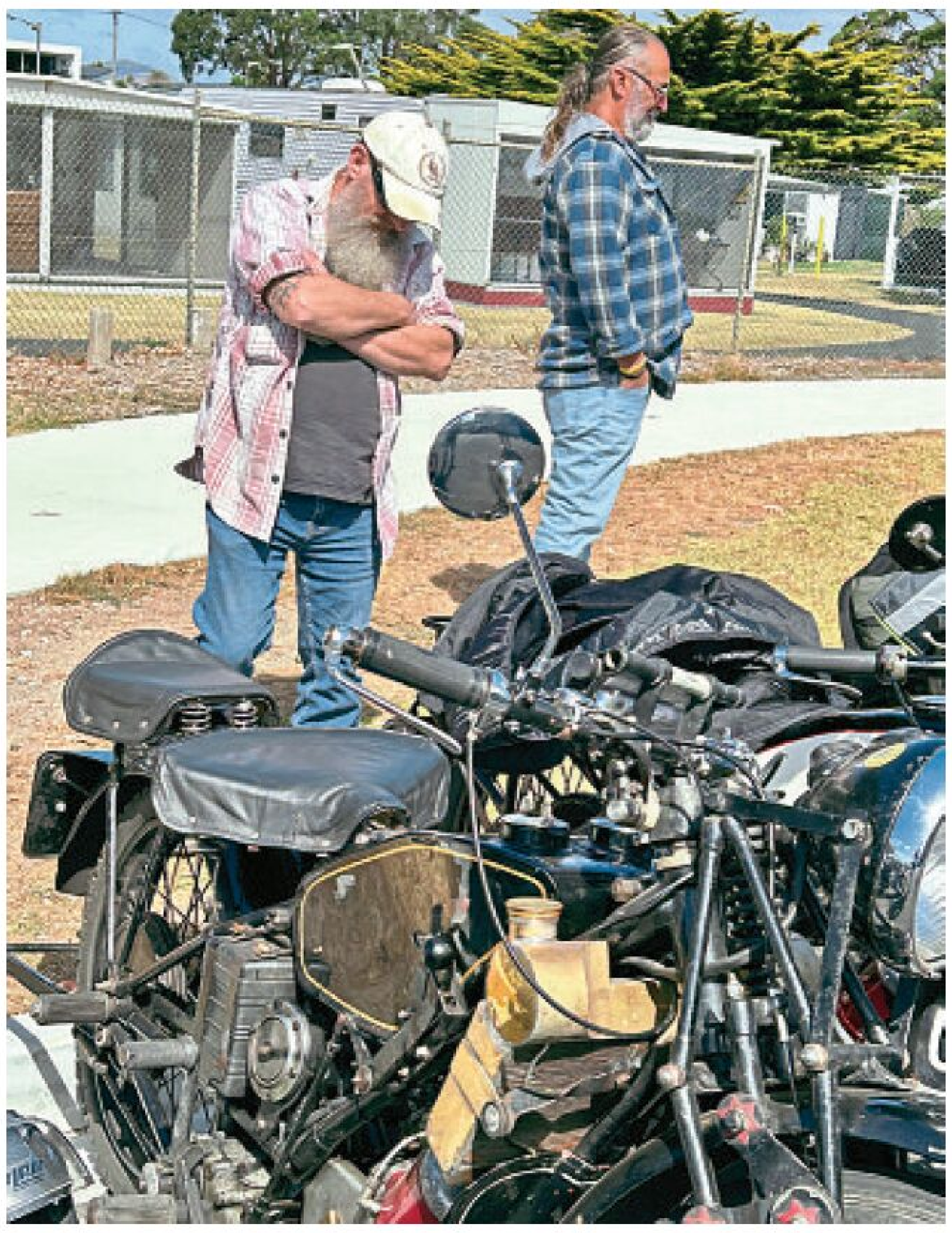
punctuated by just two rainy days, which was apparently pretty lucky even in late summer. In fact, the climate is very English, just 5°c or so warmer year-round, albeit with none of the torrid summer heat of mainland Australia. After registration at the Ulverstone Surf Club before setting out for an 80-mile acclimatisation ride inland to Leven Canyon Lookout, through scenery which resembled Scotland in sunshine, we had a briefing from rally director Gary Smith, whose 1951 BSA B31/33 special with Gold Star cams had a turn of speed sufficient for him to be ever-present at each stop along the way.

And that's one reason for the Tour of Tassie's undeniable appeal. Its USP is that it's flawlessly well organised by Gary and his gang, but without that being too obvious. The only must-do is to attend Gary's daily briefing at the start of each day's run, as much to keep abreast of any changes to the route owing to road works or suchlike. After that you're free to go as you please, at the pace of your choosing over those well-surfaced scenic roads. There are no deadlines to meet and no events to attend beyond optional lunches in remote settings that you can purchase a ticket for in advance – just enjoy the ride, with a couple of mates or on your own. The whole event ran with smooth precision, with clearly visible direction signs laid out each morning by head marshal John Rook. These complimented the very complete daily route map contained in the 52-page road book produced by rally secretary Chris Owens, which contained everything you needed to know about that day's routing, including fuel availability for both bike and rider. Two breakdown trailers followed the whole trip but were mercifully under-used, as did a truck driven by George and Wim, who between each overnight stop picked up the bags and delivered them to wherever you were staying. The whole event ran like clockwork.

Day two saw a full-day excursion to Sheffield and Mole Creek, where most of us stopped for a barbecue lunch en masse in the garden of the local hotel. This was the site of one of the last sightings of a Tasmanian Tiger; in reality, a dog-sized meat-eating marsupial with stripes on its back that was hunted to extinction in the last century. There's a rather mangy-looking pelt on display in the hotel. But that raises one of the most – maybe the only – disturbing thing about riding in Tassie, and that's the huge amount of roadkill littering the roads. The island state is more densely packed with livestock than mainland Oz and it's initially upsetting to see the copious corpses of dead platypuses, wombats, wallabies (there's no kangaroos, though), echidnas and even a rare

➡

FUEL
BOTHWELL GARAGE



Tassie Tour
Tassie Tour
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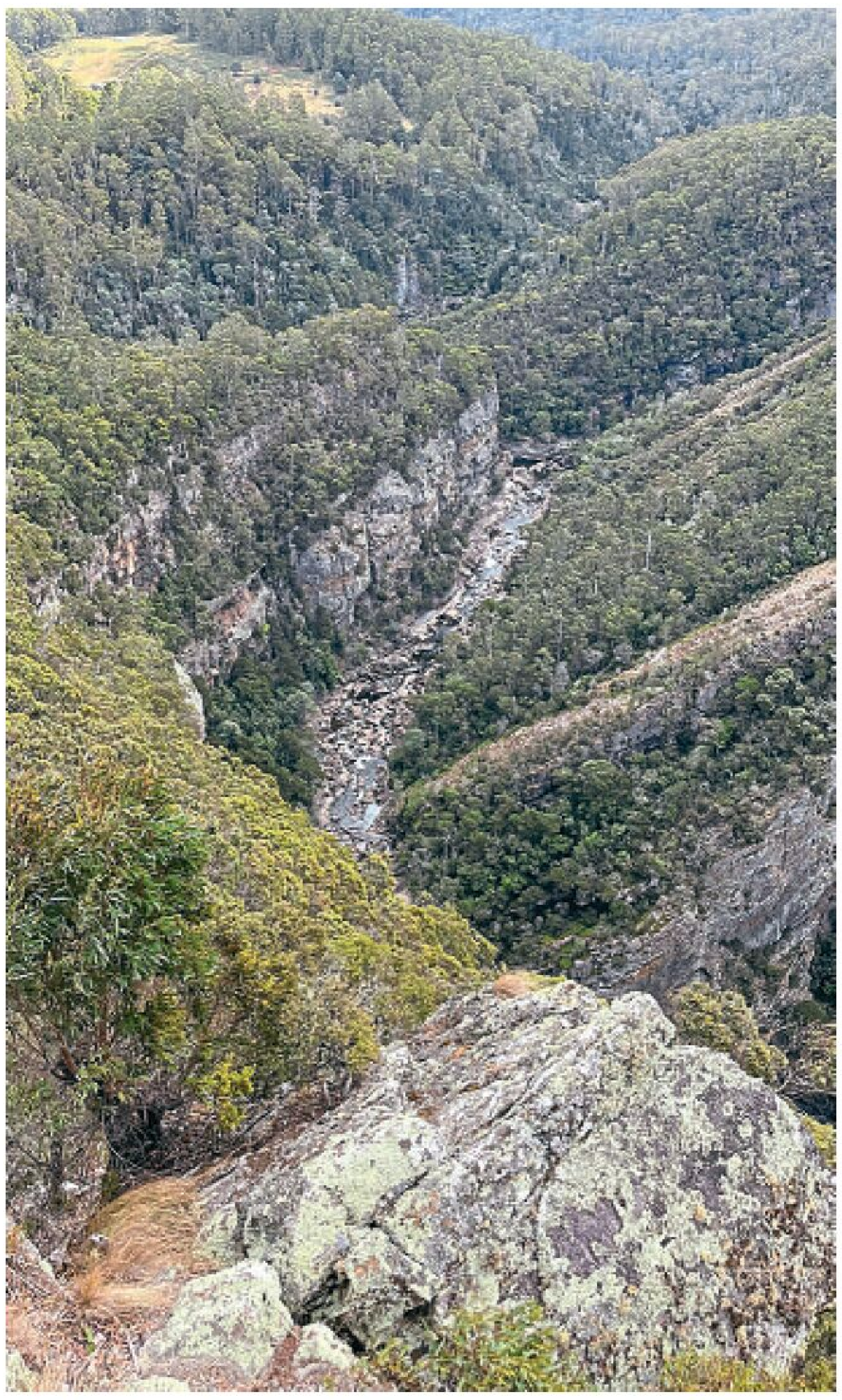

Tasmanian devil littering the road. Just as in mainland Australia, it pays not to ride a bike from an hour before sunset onwards in the countryside.

Having done our tiger spotting, my Vincent Comet-riding roommate Bill Overeem, one of the six committee members, suggested we doubled back to Sheffield to see the fantastic array of more than 60 murals covering the walls of around half its buildings. Mainly depicting the area's rich history and beautiful natural scenery (though my favourite was Alf Rowe's Garage, complete with the man himself next to his MGA sports car), the murals attract 200,000-plus people to the town annually, lots of them Japanese judging by the tour bus which arrived just as we were leaving. Sheffield epitomises the energy and inventiveness that seems so prevalent in Tassie – and also the security. Bill insisted it would be perfectly okay to leave our helmets and riding jackets draped over the bikes while we strolled around town to view the murals, and 90 minutes later he was proven right!

Next day we had a long 165-mile ride south to the harbourside former logging

> **"In fact, the climate is very English, just 5°c or so warmer year round, albeit with none of the torrid summer heat of mainland Australia."**

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town of Strahan, our base for two days, with the chance of an optional ride to Reece Dam, centre of the first hydro-electric scheme in Australia or, for those opting to take a rest from riding, a Gordon River cruise through Macquarie Harbour. There we encountered for the first time Tasmania's convict past, the remote Sarah's Island penal settlement, where convicts were first sent by the British Government from 1822 on. About 80,000 convicts were transported to Van Diemen's Land, as Tasmania was first known, before this horrific practice ceased in 1853; it acquired its current name two years later. A harbourside barbecue that evening on the beach, with delicious salmon, was an antidote to history.

Next came the longest day's ride, and a scenic one, too – a 180-mile journey to Hobart. First we climbed gently up to Queenstown, a former mining town surrounded by bare mountains with unusual pink and grey hues, where gold, silver and cooper were all mined until 2014. Then the Lyell Highway headed off to Hobart via the dramatic West Coast Range of mountains leading to Derwent Bridge. Just past there sits the literally phenomenal The Wall in the Wilderness (www.thewalltasmania.com.au), where since 1995 sculptor Greg Duncan has been carving a 100m by 3m flat-relief of explorers and bushmen in Huon pine. It's been called the Sistine Chapel in wood and is a literally incredible achievement that's all the more striking for being so unexpected. It's on the label – this is literally in the middle of nowhere. I'd like to have shown you some photos, but none are allowed, and they don't sell postcards, either.

On the second of two free days in Hobart, Peter Bender graciously hosted a lunchtime barbecue in Tinderbox, his magnificent modern mansion overlooking the Southern Ocean – and this included a chance to admire his 60-bike collection. That evening was more formal, the gala dinner at the Royal Hobart Yacht Club, at which I was interviewed by my mate and editor of *Old Bike Australasia* magazine, Jim Scaysbrook. The next day saw the first rainfall as we rode 80 miles round the large bay on which Hobart sits to Port Arthur, the largest penal settlement in Australia, and far and away the best preserved today. The scale of the place is truly breathtaking, but it's a vivid reminder of just how cruel our ancestors were and a potent example of man's inhumanity to man. Tasmania has several UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including a vast Wilderness World Heritage Area which covers 20% of the island's land mass. It encompasses no fewer than seven national parks, all wrapped up in one big, protected Tasmania Wilderness, plus there are five heritage places sites relating to the forced transportation of convicts, headed by Port Arthur. These sites are part of the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property, which was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2010.

The next two days comprised a scenic 280-mile journey along Tasmania's East Coast to Launceston, its second city,

➡

Devil's Corner

WELDBOROUGH HOTEL
Accommodation & Counter Meals

with an overnight stop in Bicheno, a fishing port where fish and chips was the must-have dinner. Next day, passing a chain of lagoons before stopping for coffee in the bustling resort of St Helens, we then turned inland for the steep climb to lunch at the Weldborough Inn, dating back to 1876. Sitting at the foot of the iconic Blue Tier mountain bike trail leading to Derby, the Moab of Tassie, this was the gateway to some superlative motorcycling country as the road twisted and turned its way to Targa and thence to Launceston. Along the way we stopped for wine tasting at Devil's Corner; Tasmania was one of the earliest parts of Australia to be planted with vines and was even the source of cuttings for the first vineyards in Victoria and South Australia. Located at a more southerly latitude than the rest of Australia's wine regions, Tasmania has a cooler climate and the potential to make distinctly different wines than in the rest of the country. The region grows primarily pinot noir, chardonnay and sauvignon blanc, and global warming has had positive effects on the local wine industry, allowing the grapes to ripen fully and produce even tastier wine.

Then came what transpired to be my favourite day's run, a 135-mile loop through the Central Highlands and parts of the Great Western Tiers mountain range, around the largest of the lakes in the Tassie Lake District called the Great Lake. My BSA Triple had been fettled overnight by hard-working Team Bender mechanic Richard Roberts, so it was in fine shape for a lap of the 4.5-mile Longford Circuit outside the historic eponymous market town, an ultra-fast public roads course which hosted the Australian car GP in the 1950s and 1960s. With the outright lap record set in 1968 by Kiwi Chris Amon in a works Ferrari 350P4, averaging 122.17mph, this was not for the faint-hearted – as a lap on the Rocket 3 proved. I just needed to be sure Richard had got it running right, you see…

Thereafter, the very grippy and well-surfaced road circled three sides of the Great Lake before dropping down to Deloraine, with the glassy Meander River flowing through it. We were spoilt for choice by the great cafes here – Tasmanian café culture is well-developed and most have really tasty food. Prices are lower than on the mainland for almost everything, probably reflecting the fact that this is not as prosperous a state as NSW or Victoria. The final day's ride took us from Launceston to Devonport, with a scenic little detour through what had all the makings of a rain forest – lush and green wooded terrain, before passing the Australian Axeman's Hall of Fame Museum in Latrobe – yes, really! – at the gateway to the port. That evening saw the farewell dinner held, and a fond farewell to about 116 new friends.

"As classic rallies go, it doesn't get any better than this," Jim Scaysbrook had said to me over a beer back in Hobart. And do you know what – he's right. The organising committee did a fabulous job of ensuring everything went smoothly and seemed to have thought of everything – well, I suppose it was their seventh such event, so they'd had a bit of practice. But it's a hard line to walk between being efficient and officious, and the Tour of Tassie organisers managed to do exactly that, resulting in this warm, convivial experience.

"Tasmania is just the most fantastic motorcycling country, with beautiful roads that are well maintained, with very little traffic, and really motorcycle-conscious drivers. If you come up behind someone, they'll pull over and let you pass," said Nick Jeffery, a fellow Brit on his third tour on a Bender-loaned bike. "The scenery is wonderful, with a great variety of countryside in a relatively small space, and you meet such a diverse selection of people here, where everyone is so friendly and hospitable, and just plain nice. It's worth the time and expense of getting here, because it's a long old flight out from Europe. But *Vaut le voyage*, as they say in the Michelin Guide!"

I couldn't agree more. **CBG**

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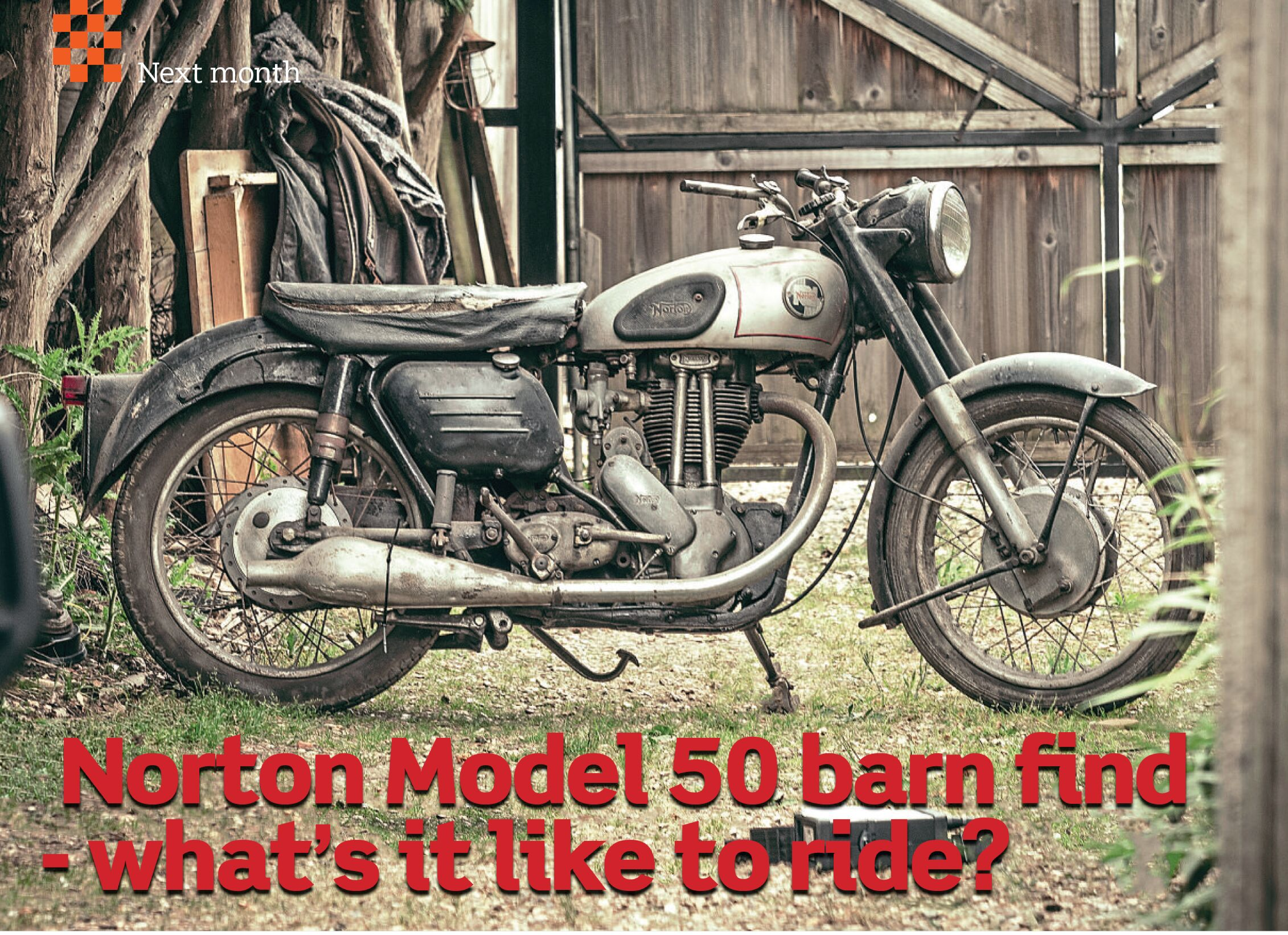

# Norton Model 50 barn find - what's it like to ride?

## Who's who ||

**EDITOR** || Matt Hull
editor@classicbikeguide.com
**PUBLISHER** || Tim Hartley
thartley@mortons.co.uk
**ART EDITOR** || Kelvin Clements
**PAGE DESIGNERS** || Druck Media
**PRODUCTION EDITOR** || Lucy Wood
**GROUP ADVERTISING MANAGER** || Sue Keily
**ADVERTISING** ||
Simon Meyer 01507 529310
smeyer@mortons.co.uk
**ARCHIVE ENQUIRIES** || Jane Skayman
01507 529423 jskayman@mortons.co.uk
**SALES AND DISTRIBUTION MANAGER** || Carl Smith

**HEAD OF MARKETING** || Charlotte Park
**PUBLISHING DIRECTOR** || Dan Savage
**COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR** || Nigel Hole

**EDITORIAL ADDRESS** ||
Kelsey Media Ltd, Media Centre, Morton Way,
Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR
**WEBSITE** ||
www.classicbikeguide.com

**GENERAL QUERIES AND BACK ISSUES** ||
01507 529529 24hr answerphone
Email: help@classicmagazines.co.uk
Web: www.classicmagazines.co.uk

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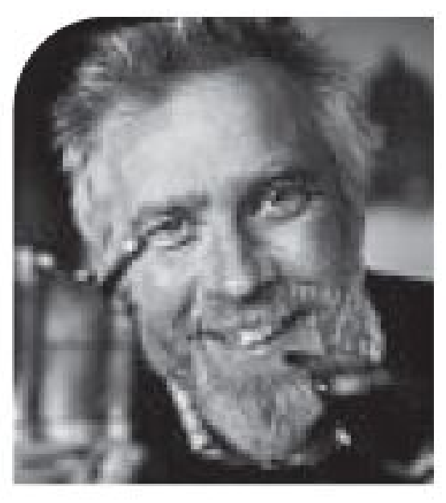

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# CCM goes into administration

Just before this month's issue of *Classic Bike Guide* went to press, it was announced that legendary British motorcycle manufacturer CCM had collapsed into administration after more than 50 years of manufacturing specialist motorcycles.

Trials rider Alan Clews founded CCM as Clews Competition Machines in the early 1970s, when he bought huge quantities of surplus stock from BSA of its 500cc unit single engines as the Birmingham company went under. Clew's machines were made with updated versions of the BSA engines in Clews frames at Jubilee Works in Bolton and flew the flag in British off-road competition for decades.

More recently, CCM made road-legal off-roaders including the awesome GP450 rally bike, bikes for the British Army, and in 2017 a new range of radical roadsters appeared called the Spitfire at first, with 650cc four-stroke single engines in a unique 'tubes of art' frame. These bikes were produced in a series of limited editions and became a fairly common sight, with the Bolton factory turning out about 300 bikes a year. Modern CCMs were always lightweight, adding to their charm.

CCM received a significant investment in 2021 from Pitalia Capital, the investment business funded by Bolton entrepreneur Anil Pitalia. The intention was that this was to fund "an international growth drive" and initially the team expanded with the ambition of serving "the pent-up demand across Europe and the United States." About 50 people were employed to design, make, and market the machines. Plans were announced for a new adventure bike, dubbed Project X.

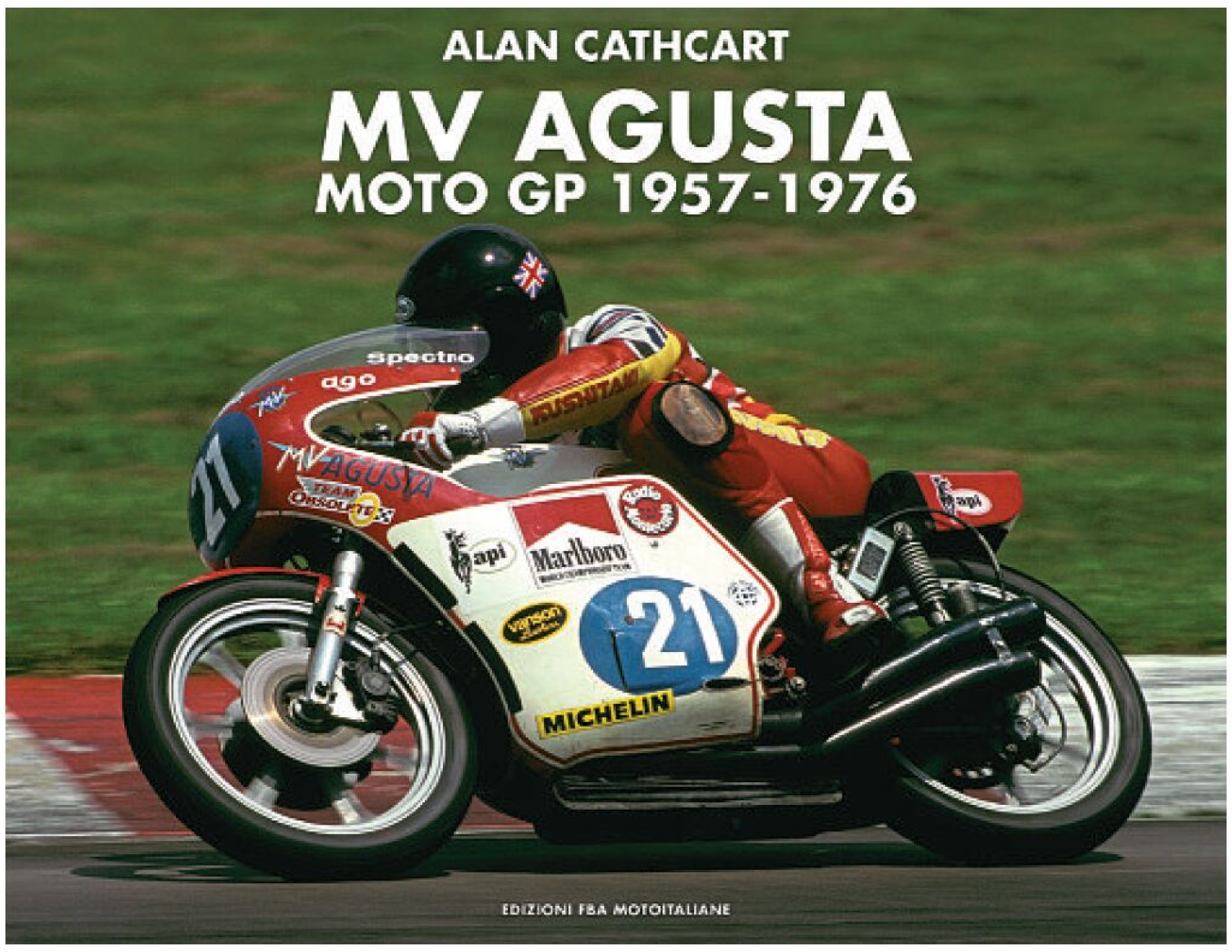
Sadly, expectations were not met by reality and earlier this year there were redundancies after it was found that CCM sales had halved in the previous 12 months. Attempts to bring in more custom by selling bikes through interest-free finance and PCP schemes with initial low payments did not succeed, and the collapse of one of the company's major franchise holders, Completely Motorbikes, forced them to buy back unsold machines. Redundancies saw the workforce cut to just 12.

Speaking to the business website TheBusinessDesk.com, a CCM spokesperson said: "This is a challenging time for everyone involved — our dedicated team, our loyal riders, and the wider CCM community which has supported us over the years. We are proud of the motorcycles we've built and the legacy we've shared with so many. We would like to sincerely thank everyone who has been part of this journey."

Administrators have been appointed for six businesses – CCM Motorcycles (UK), Jumptec, Clews & Sons, Alegatum, and two 'Project Black Investor' companies.

A statement on the CCM Facebook page does offer a glimmer of hope: "Sad news for British motorcycling – CCM Motorcycles has been placed into administration by Pitalia Group. A legendary name in UK bike manufacturing, known for its handcrafted machines and bold innovation, now facing uncertain times. Thoughts go out to the workers, engineers, and fans of the brand. Let's hope this isn't the end of the road for CCM."

# MV AGUSTA – MOTO GP 1957-1976



In a new book filled with many previously unpublished photographs, renowned British journalist Alan Cathcart tells the glorious story of MV Agusta's MotoGP legacy and the exceptional riders who brought these machines to life, from John Surtees and Mike Hailwood to Giacomo Agostini.

Cathcart unveils the behind-the-scenes story of MV patriarch Count Domenico Agusta and his riders, and conversations with Giacomo Agostini recount his life on two wheels racing for the Count. He also goes trackside, allowing the reader to experience through hands-on accounts the thrill of riding such iconic motorcycles which for decades remained hidden from the media spotlight. Besides MV's failed attempt at producing a Formula 750 racer to equal its Ducati rival's desmo V-twins, this book also offers a rare glimpse behind the fairings of MV Agusta's 350cc and 500cc World champions, in both three-cylinder and four-cylinder configurations, with countless photos revealing the technical marvels of these legendary machines.

The book is available only in a limited, individually numbered edition of just 1000 copies, featuring a hardcover binding and high-quality paper, and texts in both English and Italian. The 168-page book with 86 large format photos, costing 55 Euro plus shipping, is available for order now, exclusively through the publisher's website: **www.motoitaliane.it**

# Enfield partners with Frog to build custom bike

Royal Enfield has entered the biker fashion scene in collaboration with London-based jewellery and lifestyle brand The Great Frog.

Royal Enfield said the partnership "brings together the distinctive worlds of motorcycling and rock 'n' roll-inspired jewellery through a custom-inspired chopper motorcycle, a limited-edition handcrafted sterling silver ring, and an exclusive apparel collection."

The bike itself will trigger memories for anyone who owned or built a 'chopper' in the UK in the mid to late 1970s, or indeed bought a 'factory custom,' as it bears a marked resemblance to those machines, with high 'bars, stepped seat and short pipes fitted to a specially commissioned custom Royal Enfield Super Meteor 650.

Accompanying the motorcycle is a limited-edition sterling silver ring, hand-made in London by The Great Frog's artists, and a range of collaborative apparel that "embodies the character and design ethos of both Royal Enfield and The Great Frog" and will be sold exclusively at the Great Frog stores in London, Los Angeles and New York.

# A right Royal prize from the NMM

It is around midsummer, so that means it's time for the National Motorcycle Museum to launch its summer raffle – with a rare late Triumph Bonneville from Meriden as first prize.
The winner will ride off on a shiny 1981 Triumph Bonneville Royal Wedding 750cc (Limited Edition). It comes with a silver frame, chrome tank and blacked-out engine, with an electric start. A collector's or riders' dream, the Royal model is one of just 125 ever made.

Second prize is £1500 to spend on Sealey Tools in the National Motorcycle Museum Shop and third prize is a Sealey Tools Patriot Roll Cab Tool Cabinet worth more than £700.

Tickets cost £3 each at **www.thenmm.co.uk**. The draw date is October 26 at the Museum LIVE event and proceeds will help support the museum.

The winter raffle prize, a Yellow Peril Norvil 750cc Norton Commando, was won by Bernard Rodemark, of East Sussex. Well done, sir!

BONNEVILLE

# Bajaj buys KTM

Indian bike maker Bajaj has taken a controlling stake in troubled Austrian manufacturer KTM. KTM has faced regular financial challenges in recent years. Bajaj already assembles smaller KTM and Husqvarna models in India.

KTM AG CEO Gottfried Neumeister said: "Together with our long-standing partner Bajaj, we were able to work out a strategy that will enable us to raise a further 600 million Euros for our new start in addition to the 200 million Euros already made available.

"The existing sites – in particular, our main plant in Mattighofen/Munderfing – will remain the basis for our future success. This means we will continue to be an important employer for the entire region.

"In view of this new, second opportunity, we at KTM feel deep gratitude and humility towards all those within and outside our group of companies who have made it possible."

As well as making its own machines and KTM models, Bajaj has a partnership with Triumph in the UK to develop the 400cc single-cylinder lightweight motorcycles.

# Oxford Walton Jacket for classic riders launched

Bike clothing brand Oxford has launched a basic, mid-priced, black leather jacket to suit simple and retro tastes.

The Walton 2.0 is no-frills but classic-looking, with modern touches.
The black leather gives it a supple and lightweight feel, while the main seams and the arms are triple stitched for extra strength and with subtle reflective piping on the back, There is CE armour for elbows and shoulders, and belt connection loops complete a great value leather jacket with a fitted minimalist look.

The Walton starts at £219.99 making it the cheapest of Oxford's four jacket range of fuss-free classic jackets: visit **www.oxfordproducts.com**

LONDON 2025
MOTO SHOW
BIKE SHED

## *We've been to*

# Bikeshed moto show 2025

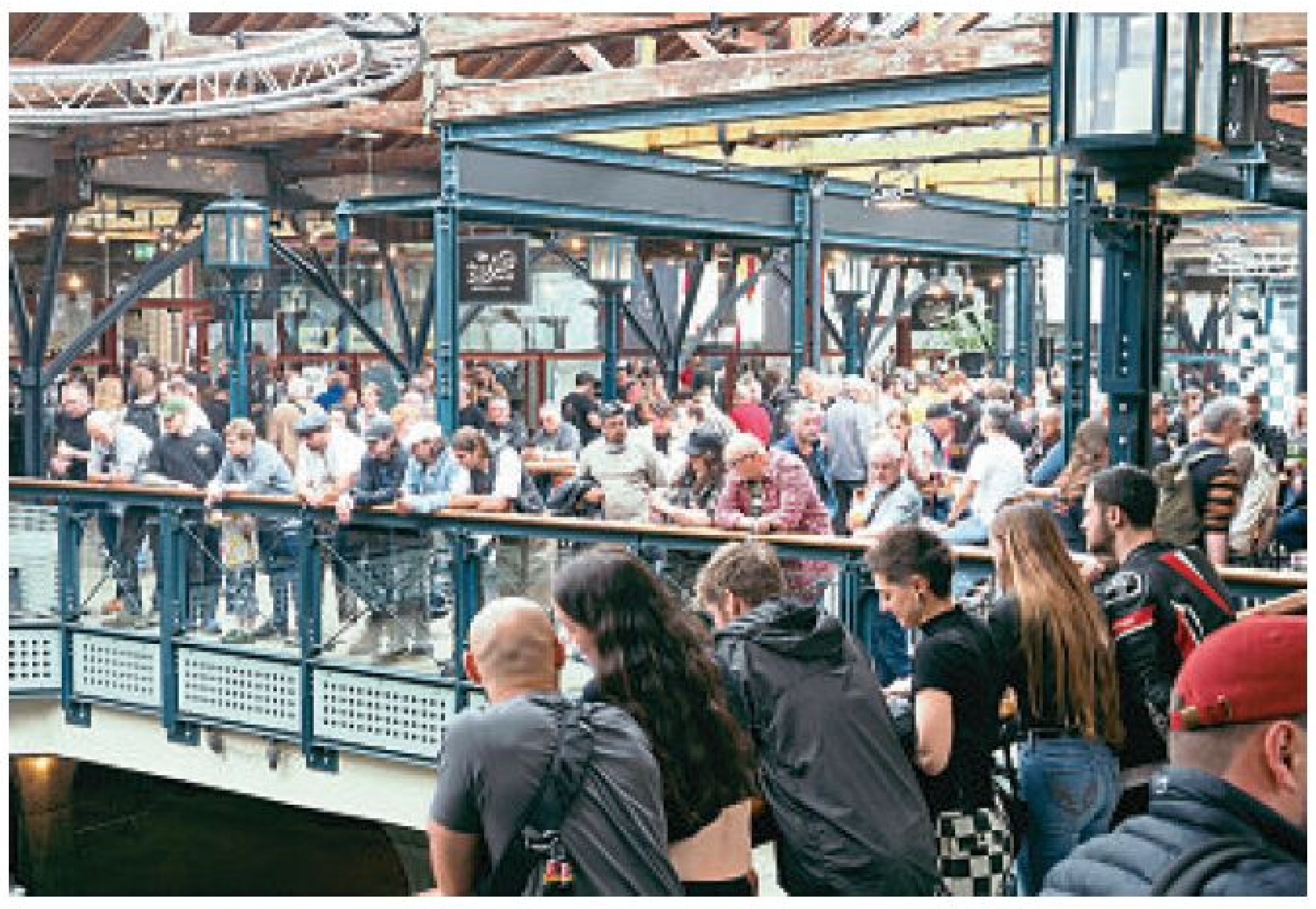
## Wapping, London

Despite being in the capital, this show has a wonderful, laid-back feel, and visitors are surrounded by some incredible bikes, with classics still in a majority...

**Words and photos by** Matt and Maria

I LIKE THIS SHOW, AND I USE IT TO recharge my enthusiasm for projects at home. It is for custom bikes, and many are based on classics, while there are some truly individual takes on how people want their bike.

Maria likes the show because of the completely different and broad mix of people coming to see the bikes. The average age is half of standard classic shows, really ➡



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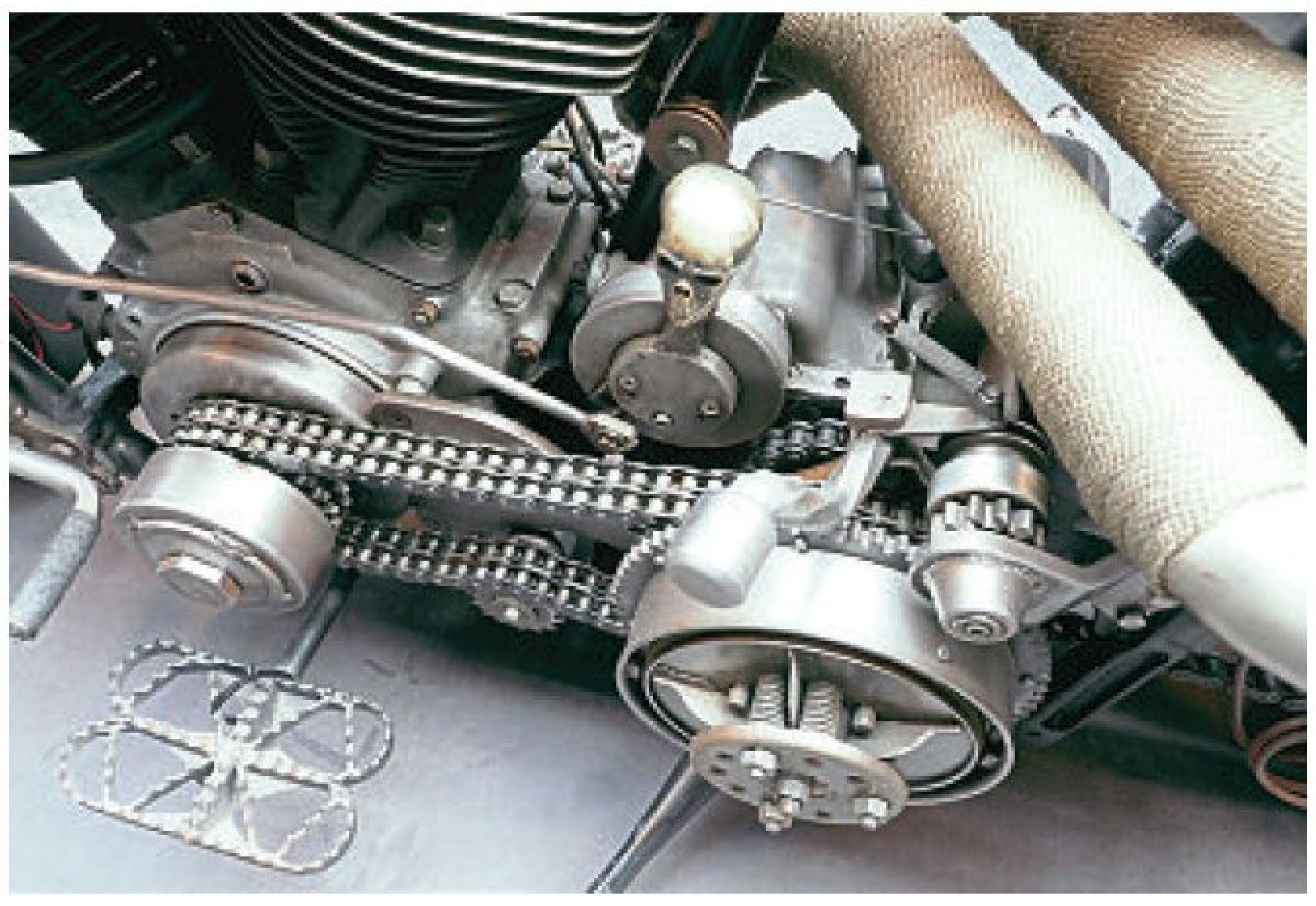

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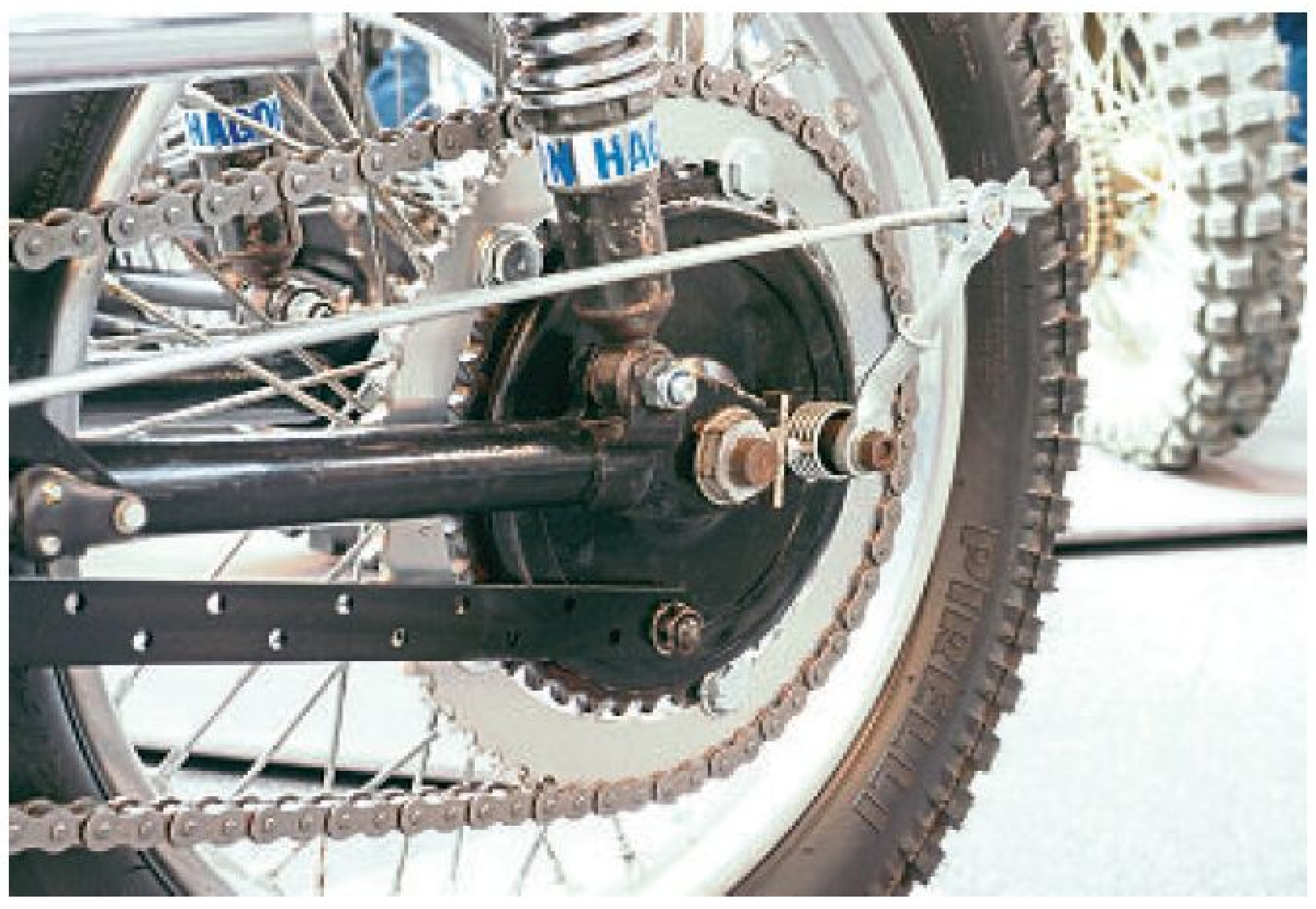

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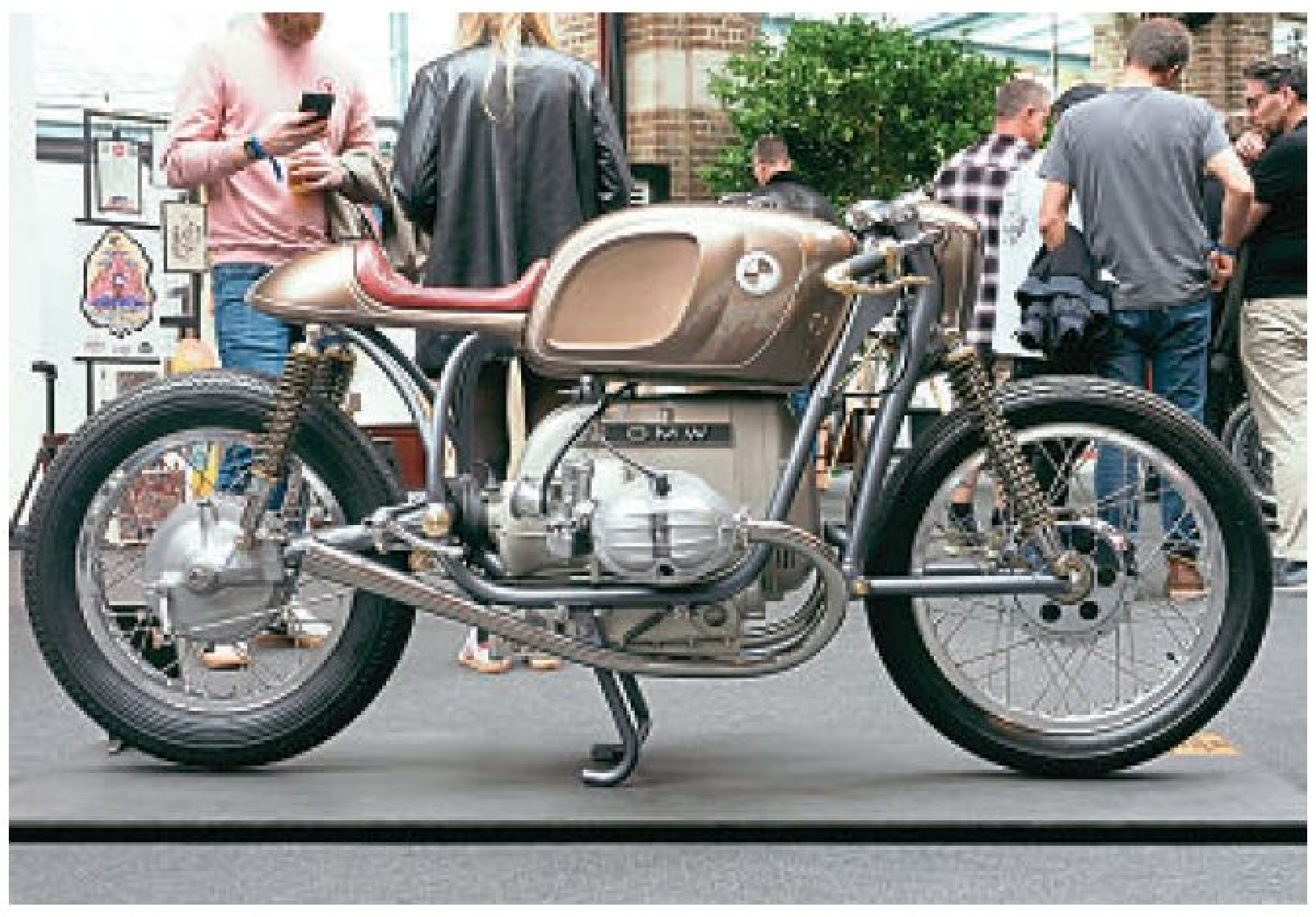

bringing home the fact that if you make a show worth coming to, they will come.

It's based in this unusual old dock building with lovely lighting, adding to the cool vibe. The food is not your usual rubbish, but hugely varied and lovely, if still not cheap; there are three bars, but it could do with more coffee outlets. Toilets are clean and the place is generally spotless – there's a very efficiently-run cloakroom for jackets and lids, which adds to the comfort of the day.

The Bikeshed Club started as an online group, which grew to a club, then to a one-off show, gathering momentum all the time as the new custom bike scene became this huge element of biking. This, in turn, led to the restaurant in Shoreditch, a part of London associated with arty types and most recently with a new store/restaurant in LA.

Fashion, art, and culture all play an equal part alongside bikes with this new world, and if that's what it takes to get a new generation into biking, then I'm all for it.

Bike of the show for me was the chrome-moly-framed chopper Commando and the BMW boxer with self-made front end. Maria liked the modern Bonneville with the Triumph script as per one of the really old logos and the desert T120R lookalike, with arrow-straight pipes.

Variety is the spice of life – and biking. If you're interested in what you see, check out bikeshedmoto.co.uk **CBG**

The Kempton Classic Bike & Scooter Show
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*We've been to*

# Kempton Park Motorcycle show

**Words and pics by** Oli Hulme

The Kempton Park show isn't as high-profile as Stafford or Bristol and only goes on for a single day but is well worth eight hours of a sunny spring Saturday.

The show contained extremely sparkly restorations of all kinds of machines. While many of the big bike builders and trade outlets are absent, it is the only show where you can touch base with one of the original café racer builders – indeed, the outfit that can be said the have started the whole game off in the first place: Dresda.

Dave Degens no longer takes part in bike building operations, having retired after six decades, but the Dresda company still turns out some stunners, including old-school Tritons and more modern creations with engines from modern Triumphs and other manufacturers. One that showed up in the private entries was an absolute bruiser of a Hinkley triple-engined beast that sounded like all the hounds of hell had turned up in Surrey. Even the Moto Rumi club stand nearby had its own tribute to Dave Degens, who started out in his racing career on a Moto Rumi in the early 1960s.

HONDA
RUP61M

The KTT Mk 1 of Simon Goodman, he of the famous Velocette family, was on the Velo stand, while Kempton also attracts the scooter crowd and a large number of

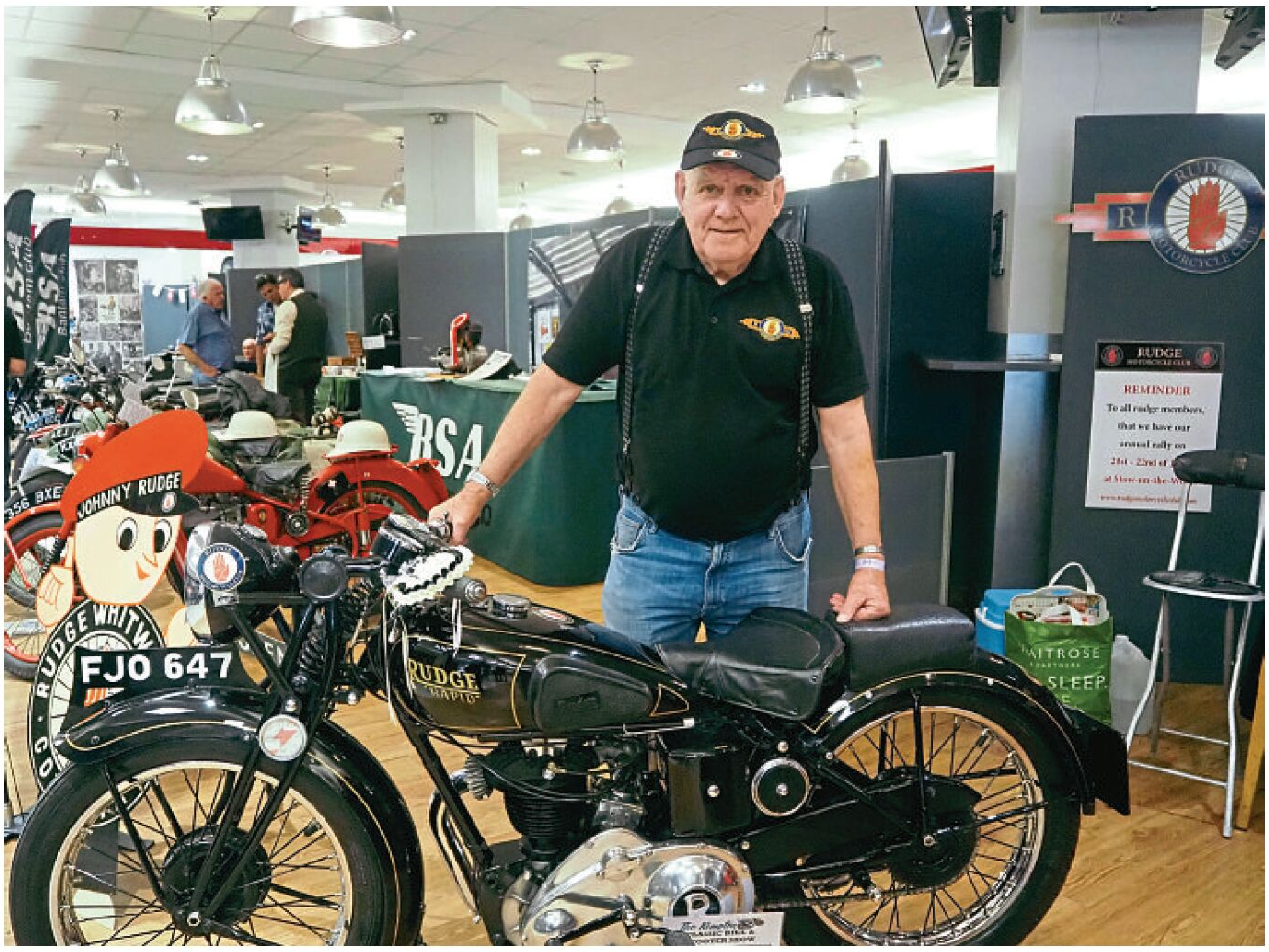
Veteran
Vespa
Club
Veteran

Dresda
www.dresda.co.uk

Dresda
www.dresda.co.uk

PIZZERIA
TRITON

MARSTON SUNBEAM CLUB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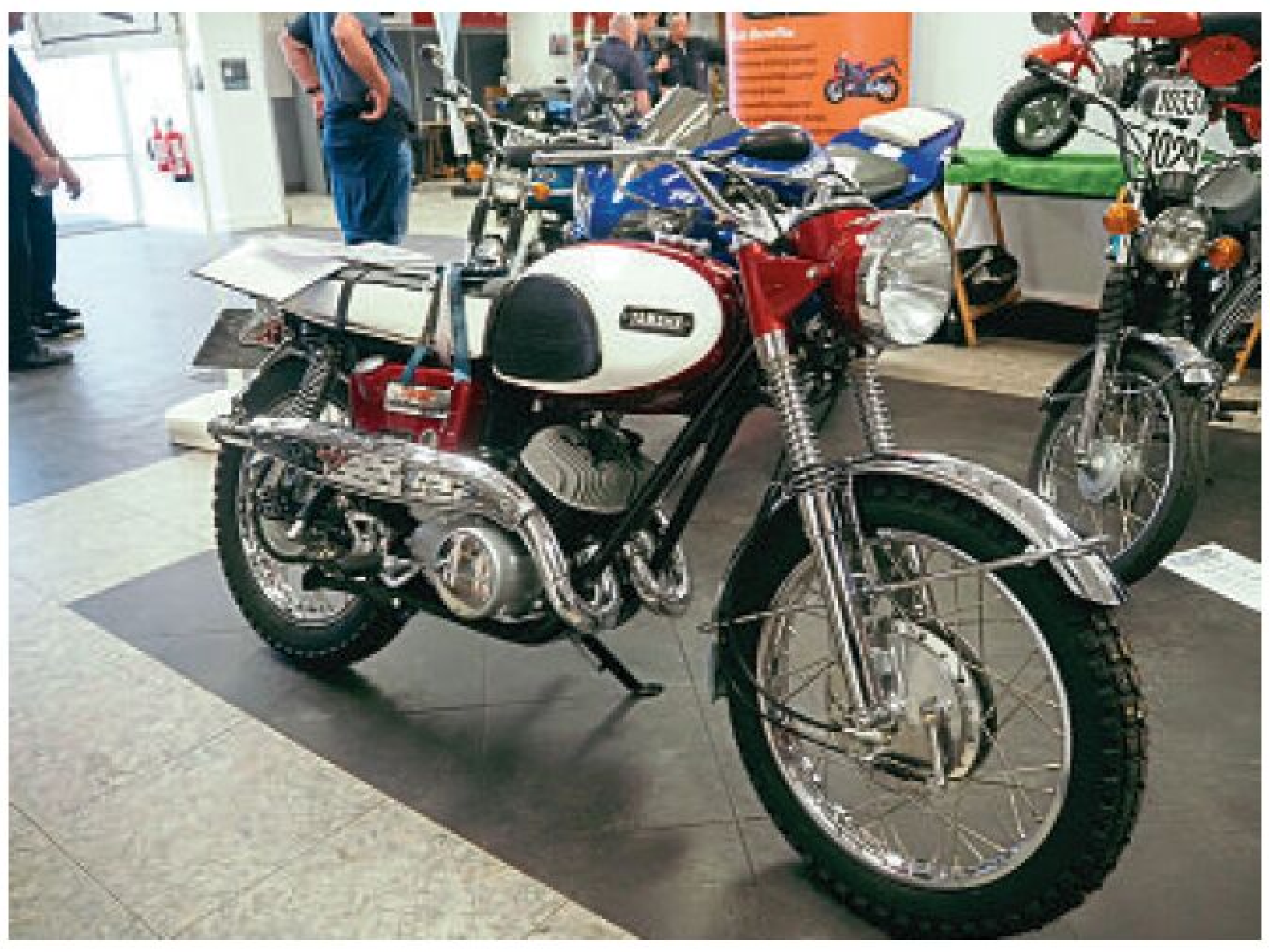
RUDGE MOTORCYCLE CLUB
REMINDER



punters who doubtless had Vespas and Parkas back in the day.

Best In Show was Martin Short's incredible Honda CB350. Best Club was the BSA Bantam Club, Best Vintage was Mike Griffiths' 1938 Rudge Rapid, Best Classic went to Colin Day's immaculate Yamaha Scrambler and Most Original was bestowed on an early '30s Sunbeam owned by Len Castle.

A big reason for the huge turn-out at Kempton is, of course, not the show itself but the autojumble, which is massive. It happens every month in any case, but the show brings out even more stallholders than usual. Back in the jumble's early days there were always many parts for Matchless and AJS models. This was because of the closeness of Kempton to the Plumstead factory on the other side of London and the large quantity of spares that became available when the factory closed. And, before it closed, in the lunchboxes of employees. Allegedly.

These days, the jumble is rather different. There are fewer sellers of spanners made from cheese and more selling bike spares.  Harley-Davidson parts were there in abundance – as were complete Harleys, including one very groovy custom from a respected builder that sold for a ridiculous £4000. Small Italian bikes were common and pristine Japanese bikes proliferated. **CBG**

# The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride 2025

Dress up, ride around, wave at passers-by – and all for great causes

Words and photos by Matt,

IN 2012, MARK HAWWA STARTED A RIDE IN Sydney, Australia, to raise money and awareness for certain men's health charities. It was inspired by a photo pf a TV character in a smart suit, riding his classic bike. It just looked cool, and Mark thought it could work as a fundraiser.

Riding an old-style bike in your smartest finery with many like-minded souls may not be as tricky as hiking up Kilimanjaro but tell folk why you're doing it, and many are happy to sponsor you. Thirteen years on, the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride – DGR for short – is still massively popular, raising more than £7,000,000 last year in 110 countries, and it continues to grow.

This year the CBG gang met up with 40 or so friends, organised and led by Norton 16H rider and one of life's all-round good eggs, Jerry Wymer. After a wonderful breakfast at The Black Boys pub in Aylsham, the outing took on all that is great about riding in a rural county, and the range of machinery was brilliant.

Apart from one Triumph with a small oil issue at the beginning, our gorgeous American pick-up support truck wasn't needed. We rode past Anne Boleyn's old haunt, Blickling Hall, stopping at Kelling Reading Rooms for lunch, and ended up at a local classic vehicle meet at Stody Hall gardens, near Holt. The weather played ball, and Uncle John, Maria's dad Butch, Maria, Effie, Charlie and all the riders we spoke to had a great day for a great cause. **CBG**

# Old bike mechanics Directory

Your guide to those who are willing to help us!

This is a UK directory of mechanics and engineers happy to work on our older bikes. Bikes with points and carburettors, for example. Let us know who is out there, who you trust, because no mechanics means no assistance, which means we'll be stuck looking at our stationary bikes in the shed thinking of the good ol' days… Let us know at editor@classicbikeguide.com

- **Renaissance Motor Cycle Workshops, Addingham, West Yorkshire. 07759 724123** Motorcycle learn about and work on your own bike with Roger –and you don't even need a bike!
- **Engineering Services, near Norwich, Norfolk. 01603 759508 / jdebohun@gmail.com** Jon excels in BMWs, electrics, thread cutting, CAD design and projects.
- **RiE-Store, near Brighton, West Sussex. 07741 261851 / rie-store.com** Ash and the guys know their early American bikes, as well as their British machines.
- **Robin James Engineering Services, Leominster, Herefordshire. 01568 612800** The team here offer all the services needed on classic cars and bikes.
- **AJ's Motorcycles, Hull, East Yorkshire. 07786 165335** Tony can do it all, from two-stroke to four, superbike to tiddlers, restoration and fabrication.
- **Mike Lingard, Knott End, Lancashire. 07526 922771** Brake drum skimming, disc grinding, helicoiling, turning, milling and even casting.
- **Ian Perry, near Hinckley, Leicestershire. 07954 601481** Ian is a very skilled welder specialising in aluminium, and also offers vapor blasting
- **KRF Motorcycles, near Norwich, Norfolk. 07501 275345** Kev has spent his life working on BMWs, has all the tools, and gives BMW Club members a discount.
- **Ray Petty Mechannica, Greenwich, London. 0208 8538002 / ray@raypettymechannica.com** Lots of recommendations for Ray; early Ducati and Italian makes mostly, and great atmosphere.
- **Mike Taylor, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire. 07922 838228 / picknmixtaylor@hotmail.com** Mike specialises in Triumph/BSA triples, and is happy to work on much else, full rebuilds included.
- **Northants Classic Bikes, Rushden, Northamptonshire. 01933 355525** Steve and Julie offer classic sales, parts, and workshop expertise for all classics.
- **Mick Surmann Motorcycles Ltd, Bierton, Aylesbury. 01296 486137** Proper old-fashioned bike shop, from flat tankers to modern bikes, with MoT station.
- **Brooks Engineering, Northwich, Cheshire. 01606 47008 / brookesengineering.co.uk** It has all the equipment necessary for turning, machining, welding and so on, removing broken studs etc.
- **Oak Lea Performance, Pilling, Lancashire. 07930 306009** Geoff does repairs, servicing and restorations, and custom-made exhaust systems are a speciality.
- **Kustom Choppers Ltd, Hingham, Norfolk. 01953 529150 / info@kustomchoppers.co.uk** Daniel works on all older bikes, from servicing and restoration to custom work.
- **Howard Evans, Barton-upon-Humber, North Lincolnshire. 07788 501168** Repair, restoration of classic Japanese bikes, also vapour blasting and carburettor restoration.
- **Max Smeed Restorations, South Manchester. 07307 877781 / max@max-restorations.co.uk** Max is a mechanical engineer and MoT tester, covering all types of jobs on all bikes.
- **Matt's Machine Shop, Abercynon, South Wales. 01443 742791** Works on all kinds of bikes, specialises in imperial British and American, and has a dyno.
- **Wilsons Motorcycles, Kirton, Lincolnshire. 01205 724314 / sales@wilsonsmotorcycles.co.uk** Just outside Boston, Wilsons can work on any motorcycle and has run highly successful race teams.
- **Motorcycle Service Centre, 541 Harrow Road, London, W10 4RH. 0208 9606434** Robbie looks after a huge array of classics in the West London area.
- **HTE motorcycles, near Swaffham, Norfolk. 01328 700711** Hutch specialises in classics and British bikes repairs, projects, wheel-building and engines.
- **RJ Motorcycles, Coalville, North Leicestershire. 01530 833297 / info@rjmotorcycles.co.uk** Always ready to help and will sell one O ring if that's all you need.
- **SRS Engineering, Sutton. 0208 6425685 / srsengineeringsutton.com** Mike can do rebores, machining, head skimming, anything old-school motor engineering.
- **Specialist Welding Service, Banstead. 07957 557935 / specialistweldingservices.co.uk** Andy is a time-served welder capable of the most intricate work on fins, heads and cases.
- **Red Dragon Refinishing, Rhostyllen, Cheshire, near Wrexham. 01978 448983 / wayne@rdwales.com** Blasting, plating, powder-coating and painting are just part of what Red Dragon can do.
- **Wells Forest Classics, near Peterhead, Aberdeenshire. 07766 727924 / scottymcb3@gmail.com** Scotty McBride specialises with Royal Enfield and Moto Guzzi but is happy to look at all makes.
- **Angus Classic Bikes, Forfar, Angus, Scotland. 01307 463838 / www.angusclassicbikes.co.uk** Happy to work on any type of bike, fit tyres, MoT, clean carbs and vapour blast.
- **Bob Grant Motorcycles, Pitscottie, Fife. 01334 829415** Service and repairs, parts, suspension, dyno tuning, vapour blasting, and restoration.
- **Barrie Brown Wheel Building, Windygates, Fife. 01333 352102 / 07711 916722** Complete wheel-building, blasting and restoration service available for any make.
- **Engine Resource Dundee, Dundee. 01382 223686 / engineresource.co.uk**Nearly 50 years of engine remanufacturing and auto engineering.
- **Sandy Bloy's classic repair garage, Perth. 07772 249309** Sandy specialises in classic sales, repairs, parts, and total classic restoration services.
- **Dynotech Ecosse, Hillington, Glasgow. 07779 159065 / dynotechecosse.com** Modern bikes and classics are welcome for routine to total restoration and dyno tuning.
- **Steelworx Motorcycles, Wishaw, Lanarkshire. 07710 753912** Steelworx is known for custom builds, but just as happy doing general repairs and servicing.
- **The VOC Vincent Spares Company Ltd, near Kettering. 01536 312220 / vincentspares.co.uk** Vincent spares in stock, repairs, rebuilds, and a selection of bikes for sale. CBG

# KING OF THE DAREDEVILS

The TTT Knievel timepiece. Made from Evel Knievel's final stuntbike, the 1977 "Shark Jump" Harley-Davidson XR750.

KING OF THE DAREDEVILS
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REC

# Fancy a day out?

Summer's here and the time is right for dribbling bits of a melting 99 down the front of your leathers. Lots of things on this month, all of them good, and there is something for everyone. Just to abuse his position, Oli would like to draw your attention to the Langport Bike Night ride-in show on Sunday, July 6. If you would like to see your bike in a future edition of CBG, this is a fine opportunity to show it off, that's all we are saying…

## June

- **25 Bucks British Classic Motorcycle Club Shiny Bike Night:** The Plough at Cadsden, near Princes Risborough, Bucks HP27 0NB. Tel Laurence 07802 440077 or visit www.norbsa02.freeuk.com
- **25 JULY ISSUE OF *CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE* ON SALE NOW**
- **29 Romney Marsh Classic Autojumble with Ride-In Show:** Hamstreet, near Ashford, Kent TN26 2JD. Visit www.elk-promotions.co.uk
- **29 Triton & Cafe Racer Day + BSA GS & RGS OC Anniversary:** Ace Café, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge Park, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **30 Cassington Bike Night:** Join thousands of bikers in the lovely Cotswold village of Cassington for the annual meet, chat, look, eat, and drink. Londoners can join the ride-out to Cassington Bike Night from Ace Café; event starts at 4pm, Cassington, Witney, Oxon OX29 4DY.

## JULY

- **4-7 Bike Festival South West:** A fun-filled weekend designed for all the family at Royal Cornwall Showground, Wadebridge PL27 7JE. Visit www.bikefestivalsw.com
- **4 AUGUST ISSUE OF *THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE* IS OUT NOW**
- **5 YOUR *OLD BIKE MART* WITH YOU TODAY**
- **5 The Sussex British Motorcycle Owners' Club Open Day:** In West Sussex. Visit www.sbmoc.co.uk for full details.
- **5 Bike Bonanza at the Shelsley Walsh Hill Climb:** Paddock displays include Suzuki motorcycles raced by British legends Barry Sheene and David Jefferies, plus Steve Parrish meet and greet, motorcycle club displays, Show and Shine, trade stands, interviews, live music and more. Shelsey Walsh Hill Climb, Worcs WR6 6RP. Visit www.shelsleywalsh.com
- **5 Diamond Day – NCC London Custom Bike Show:** Ace Café, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge Park, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com.
- **5 Huggys Auto Shindig:** Motorcycle/car gathering and swapmeet at Mallory Park Race Circuit, LE9 7QE. Tel 01827 712906, 07968 948886 or 07984 318952. Email huggysspeedshop@yahoo.com
- **5-6 Velocette Owners' Club National Rally 2025:** Lichfield Rugby Club, Tamworth Road WS14 9JE. Email westmidlands-centre@velocetteowners.com
- **6 Langport Bike Night Ride-In Bike Show:** All bikes welcome, six trophies, admission free, 11am-4pm at Bere Cider Farm, Woodpecker Lodge, Bere, Aller, Langport TA10 0QX. Some of the South West's finest classics, customs and specials gather in the Somerset countryside. You'll be very lucky to find a more varied and enjoyable summer Sunday this year, and every bike is considered for a trophy. Admission is free, though donations to Prostate UK would be appreciated.
- **6 Bike Day:** Ace Café, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge Park, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **6 Ride-out to Brooklands Motorcycle Day:** Ace Café, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge Park, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com.
- **7 JULY ISSUE OF *REAL CLASSIC* OUT NOW**
- **8 Worcester Auto Club Ride-In:** Tower Buildings, Perdiswell Park, Worcester WR3 7SN. Visit WAC Motorcycle Club Facebook or tel 07864 567705.
- **12 South Midlands Autojumble:** Oveross Market, Ross-on-Wye HR9 7QQ. Tel 01989 750731 or visit www.southmidlandsautojumble.com
- **12 BMF Connected:** Mallory Park, Kirkby Mallory, Leics. Visit www.bmf.co.uk/events
- **13 SMCC Fentiger Run:** Tulip map run around the Fens, starting at Newmarket. Email fentigerrun@btinternet.com
- **13 Brazilian Bike Day:** Ace Café, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge Park, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **16 AUGUST ISSUE OF *CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS* IS OUT NOW**
- **17-19 The Malle Mile Festival:** Join the greatest and most inappropriate motorcycle race and festival in the country at Grimsthorpe Castle, Bourne, Lincs PE10 0LY. Visit www.mallelondon.com
- **19 Kempton Autojumble:** Kempton Park Racecourse, Kempton TW16 5AQ. Visit www.autojumble.info
- **19 Scorton Auto and Bike Jumble:** North Yorkshire Events Centre, Scorton, near Richmond, DL10 6EJ. Tel Bert 07909 904705.
- **20 VJMC + '70s Bike Day:** Ace Café, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge Park, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **20 Honda Owners' Club GB Classic Show:** Sammy Miller Motorcycle Museum, Bashley Crossroads, New Milton, Hampshire BH25 5SZ. Tel 07808 645746.
- **20 Kingswood Bike Show:** Kingswood Rugby Club, BS15 9RA.
- **20 Bike4Life Ride Out & Festival for Midlands Air Ambulance:** One of the biggest bike events, and awesome 1960s jet aircraft too. RAF Museum Cosford, Shropshire, TF11 8UP.
- **26 Squires Café Autojumble:** Pitches are £5 each for sellers. South Milford, Leeds, LS25 5LX.
- **27 Summer Classic Bike Show & Autojumble:** South of England Showground, Ardingly, near Gatwick, RH17 6TL. Visit www.elk-promotions.co.uk
- **27 Indian & Victory Bike Day:** Ace Café, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge Park, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com

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Would you like your event, bike night, or gathering to appear in these listings? Let us know at least six weeks in advance by emailing **editor@classicbikeguide.com**

AUTOJUMBLE.INFO
KEMPTON • NEWARK • NETLEY • STRATFORD

WHAT'S COMING UP IN THE AUTOJUMBLE CALENDAR?

Kempton AUTOJUMBLE
KEMPTON PARK, MIDDLESEX, TW16 5AQ
JULY 19, 2025
• ADVANCE TICKETS ON SALE NOW
• STANDARD ADVANCE (FROM 9:30AM) - £6
• EARLY BIRD ADVANCE (FROM 8:00AM) - £9
• UNDER 16S FREE
kemptonautojumble.co.uk

'NorMous NEWARK AUTOJUMBLE
NEWARK SHOWGROUND, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, NG24 2NY
AUG 10, 2025
• ADVANCE TICKETS ON SALE NOW
• STANDARD ADVANCE (FROM 10:00AM) - £6
• EARLY BIRD ADVANCE (FROM 8:00AM) - £9
• UNDER 16S FREE
newarkautojumble.co.uk

EUROJUMBLE
NETLEY MARSH, HAMPSHIRE SO40 7GY
SEPT 5-6, 2025
• ADULT ADVANCE FRIDAY £9
• ADULT ADVANCE SATURDAY £7
• UNDER 16s FREE
netleymarsheurojumble.com

STRATFORD AUTOJUMBLE
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON RACECOURSE, WARWICKSHIRE, CV37 9SE
SEPT 7, 2025
• ADVANCE TICKETS ON SALE NOW
• ADULT ADVANCE - £5
• UNDER 16S FREE
stratfordautojumble.co.uk

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# Products

## Mitas H-06 tyres

- **Mitas-tires.com**
- **£140 pair (for the BMW R100RS)**

I'd been using the continental tyres recommended for my old BMW R100RS, **writes Matt** – they had the same pattern as original and looked good. I was getting decent mileage compared to modern bikes, but I felt they should have been lasting longer, and they were not dealing well with my old suspension. Cornering also went off once the rear started to wear and was horrid in the wet – on my bike, that is, which is nowhere near perfect.

Following the success of Mitas trials pattern on the CL350, I decided to be a skinflint and try these Mitas H-06 tyres. They are significantly cheaper than the Contis at £87 for a rear – though I found one for £61 delivered. The front came in at £48 (£68 RRP). They look just like TT100s and come in a number of popular classic sizes. Modern bike owners wouldn't appreciate this, but they are so easy to fit at home with levers compared to either the Heidenau I often use, or the Continentals. The sidewalls don't seem thinner, but they are softer, and they just pop on.

Handling, so far after 100 miles, has transformed the BM. I guess the more pliable sidewalls must add to the excellent handling they offer – and that's in the rain or shine. But I can lean over with much more confidence, even with tired headraces. I will report back on manners as they wear out, but so far they're a win-win.

## Arai Quantic

- **whyarai.co.uk**
- **£599**

Arai
HELMET
Drudi Performance

I wanted a new helmet after wearing Matt's cast-offs for several years, **writes Maria.** We do a lot of riding and so can justify a bit more cost. My favourite helmet to date was a Shoei GT with drop-down visor, which I loved. Matt's also got a Shoei Neotec 3 he uses a lot and loves it, so naturally, I tried that make, but I couldn't find the perfect fit with any of its models. Trying his Arai felt no good, so we tried many others, walking around shops with different lids on for several minutes each – you don't notice those uncomfortable press-points at first!

I had almost given up when we tried the Arai Quantic. Being aimed more at touring riders, the shape is totally different to the racier RX-7V Evo, but crucially, the opening is wider, which makes it easier to live with – getting the helmet on is much more comfortable, especially with my ear piercings.

With a pricey helmet comes a gorgeous liner, a chin guard, quick-release cheek pads, a visor that seals, and vents that work, and there's also space for an intercom to fit unobtrusively. But annoyingly, no drop-down visor, so I just had to buy a fancy iridium visor, which was easy as most Arai helmets use similar VAS-V visors.

Since getting the Quantic, I've done thousands of miles. It is so comfortable, it's almost a pleasure to wear – though it is the noisiest helmet I've worn (*I'll second that – Matt*), so ear plugs are a must. But then I always wear them, so…

Who knows if it works? No one will, hopefully! But if I do bonk my head, the experience, research and development, and quality will give anyone wearing an Arai the best possible chance of escaping injury. It's apparently the reason they don't have a drop-down visor, the reason they are heavy, and the reason they won't make a flip-up helmet. Yet they do make an open-face. Overall, I'm very happy with my decision.

# Quad lock mount and phone case

**moto-direct.com**
**Case £26; mount £36**

How much?? Newsflash – that phone case you got for a fiver from the market is rubbish and doesn't protect your phone from the wind. I've a large phone, because I'm blind, and I have dropped it several times with – so far – no issues in this case. It fits perfectly snuggly, isn't obtrusive, and it works.

But the magic is on the back. The four-prong socket plugs into Quad Lock mounts that are available for handlebars, thinner mirror or cross brace stalks, and are infinitely adjustable. A little adjustment on the BM means I have little or no sun glare, it is perfectly in my eyeline, and yet it doesn't hide anything important on the clocks – apart from the high beam light, which doesn't matter as high beam isn't exactly retina-burning… You can also get changing mounts so you're charging your phone while you ride, and car or bicycle mounts so you can just mount it with them too.

Why do you need it? I use Google Maps for navigation as it will update depending on the traffic, whereas satnavs can, but have to be linked to this and that and, well, I've never managed it. My phone is waterproof, but Quad Lock make these rubberised see-through covers to minimise the issue.

Doesn't it make your phone easy to steal on the go? In theory, yes, but the plug and socket are such a perfect fit that it would be difficult. And you can have your phone horizontal or vertical. I'll own up, I haven't used other systems, and many have jumped on this bandwagon recently. But so far, I can't ride without it if going somewhere. Excellent quality, lasting well, and an essential travelling companion.

# Optimate 5 Select charger

Optimate
High Performance Battery Chargers
optimate1.com /om5-612v
Optimate 5
AUTOMATIC BATTERY CHARGER & MAINTAINER FOR 6V & 12V LEAD-ACID BATTERIES
ampmatic
6V
12V
24-7
STD
GEL
AGM

**optimate.co.uk**
**£85**

Don't you just hate a flat battery? And is it just me, or are modern batteries not lasting as well as old ones? I don't know, things aren't what they used to be…

A battery for my B31 was £28, Maria's Honda MSX125 £25, and my BMW R100RS £120. This charger is £85, so it doesn't take many winters or small voltage drains to pay for it.

The great thing about the Select is it will charge 6v and 12v lead acid, AGM and gel batteries. Now, I did have a previous one that also did, but if the battery were below about 4-5v, it struggled to read the battery and could make a mistake – though mine never did. With this one you know it is correct, because you switch it to one or t'other.

The charger reads the info coming back from the battery, so charges accordingly and is therefore great for winter storage. And it's clever enough to know if things are wrong and switches off.

There's a lead to fit to your bike, so you don't need to keep finding the battery, and all existing Optimate chargers use the same lead. Hardly exciting, but a money-saver over time and peace of mind that you'll have a healthy start and a strong spark!

CBG

# Your guide to...

BSA
TRACKER
175/6

# BSA Tracker and Rambler 125 and 175

In that transient time of BSA in the 1980s, the Tracker and Rambler models aimed to bring a younger generation to bikes. Few examples survive...

**Words and pictures by** Oli Hulme and the BSA Owners' Club Archive

AS THE BRITISH MOTORCYCLE INDUSTRY DISAPPEARED UP ITS OWN EXHAUST pipes at the end of the 1970s, there was a small flurry of activity that saw the surviving remains pair up with foreign companies and countries in an attempt to keep something going. The Meriden Triumph co-operative struck a deal with Moto Guzzi to assemble a version of the Italian company's 125cc two-stroke single on Saturday mornings. The model was badged as a Moto-Meriden Co-Uno and turned out to be a bit of a disaster, as the bike wasn't very good quality and there were many warranty claims that swallowed up the profits (if anyone has a Co-Uno we can test, please get in touch).

Suzuki very nearly bought a big chunk of Meriden in 1977, but the collapse and revaluation of the Japanese Yen put paid to that.

The newly-formed Norton Villiers Triumph (NVT) looked at moving production of the BSA B50 single to Iraq and making the Triumph Trident, or versions of it, in the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, Yamaha was working with NVT, providing wheels and instruments for Norton Rotary police bikes, and NVT badged up an XS850 Triple as a Norton to try and capture the police bike market. The link between Yamaha and British factories was helped by the number of former British designers and factory management who had gone to work for Yamaha.

NVT, meanwhile, kept going, with talented designers Bob Trigg (who helped design Norton's Isolastic system) and Mike Ofield designing a moped which used mostly Italian components with the addition of a few British bits and some Union flag branding. These were sold as the NVT Easy Rider and came in step-thru and sports moped varieties. They were cheaply made and moderately successful, bringing in some seriously needed cash for not a lot of development outlay. The 'Made In England' branding still made a difference for sales, and the engine was used in a child's off-road bike, the Junior.

## The Rambler - the trail bike that wasn't

Something bigger and better was needed, and what Bob Trigg and Mike Ofield came up with was a quite sophisticated project – the NVT Rambler.

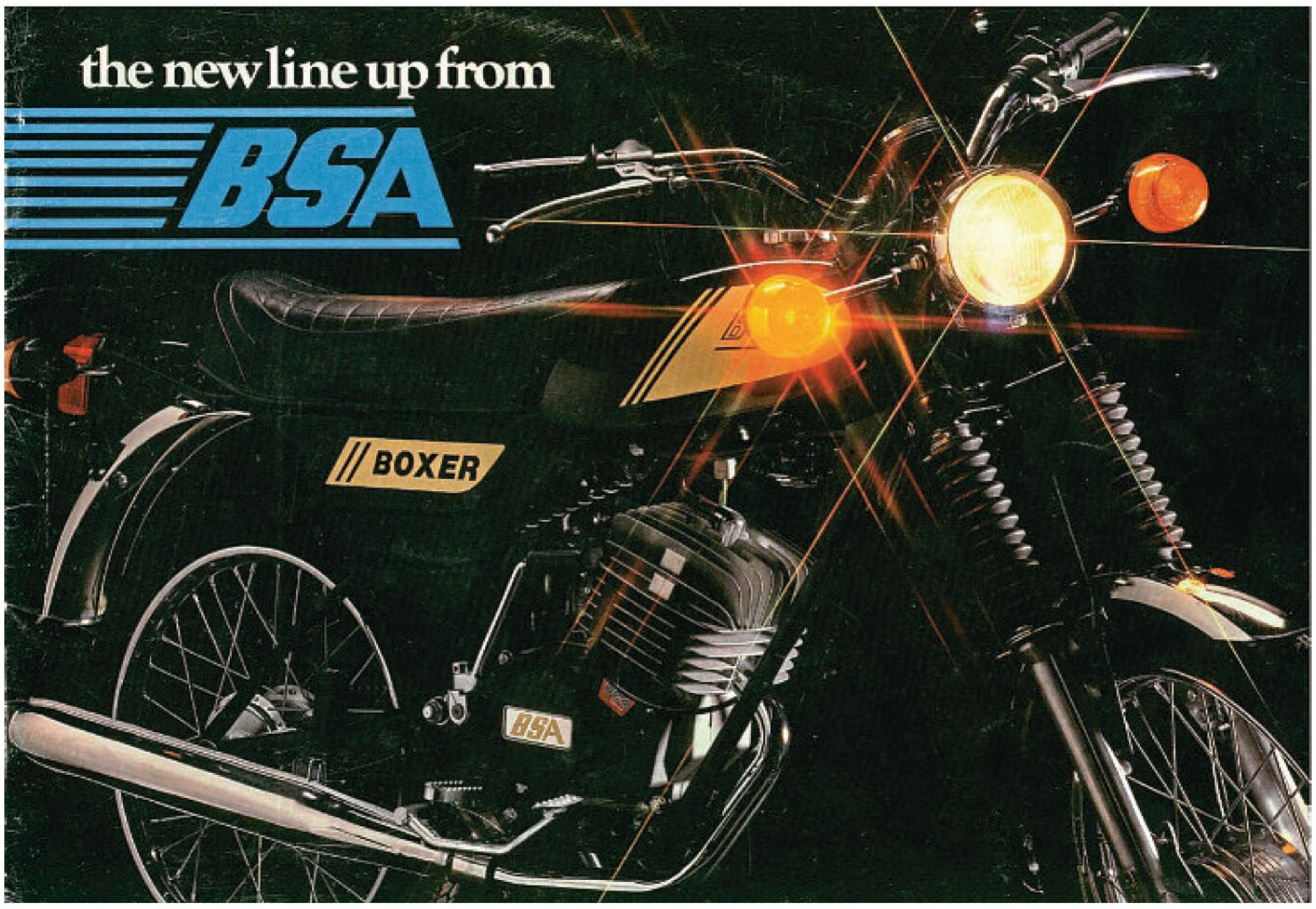
What NVT had understood and the Japanese hadn't was that the British market for trail bikes was very different to the market globally.

The Japanese-built trail bikes were more dirt bike than roadster. They came with real off-road potential, minimal braking and peaky, powerful engines. But the main British market for trail bikes was in young learner riders. They were not buying trail bikes because they wanted to take to the hills… they wanted them to take to the chip shop. If you couldn't afford a new 250, and few could, and you didn't want to be ➡

TRACKER
175/6

YAMAHA
TRACKER

> **“Suzuki very nearly bought a big chunk of Meriden in 1977, but the collapse and revaluation of the Japanese Yen put paid to that.”**



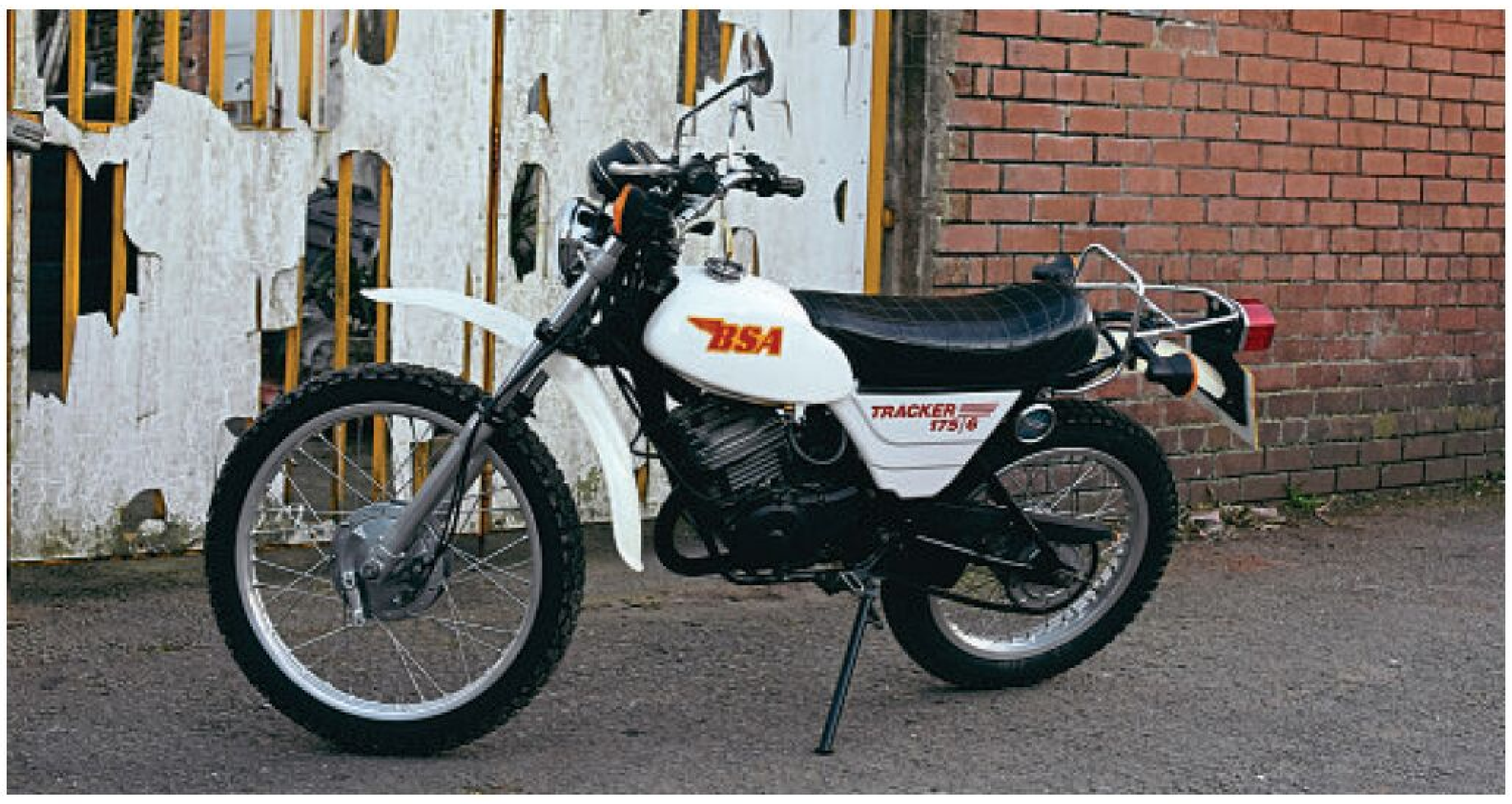
condemned to a commuter, a trail bike was stylish option, even if they were not easy to live with on the road.

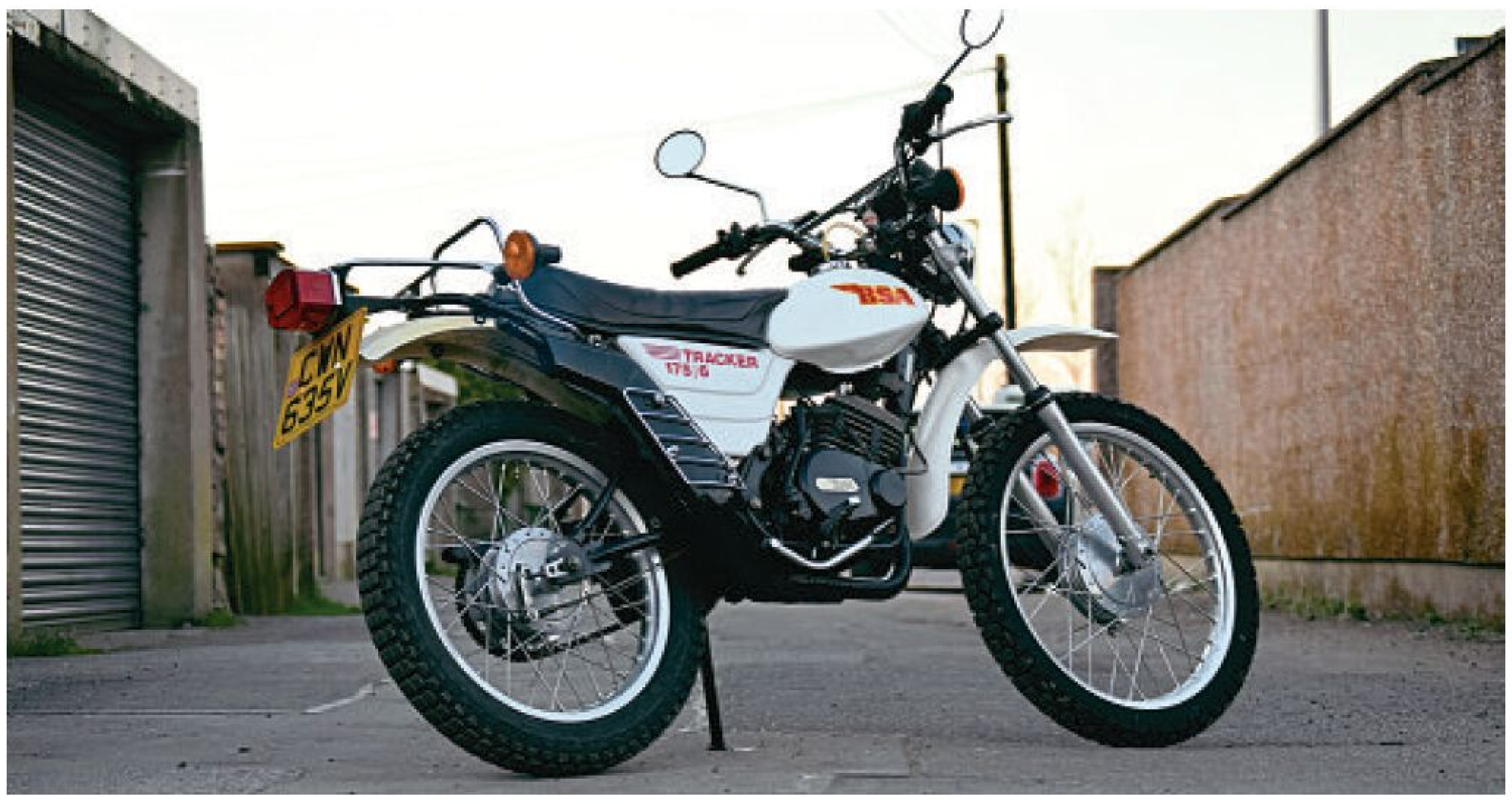
In 1976, NVT announced that it was going to produce a small learner-legal trail bike. It cut a deal with Yamaha for the supply of oil-injected two-stroke engines from its highly regarded DT125 and DT175 models and started to shop around for the rest of the bits. Wanting to make its new machine stand out, it used a new UK-designed frame with cantilever suspension. Where the frames for the NVT Rambler were made for this new model is lost in the mists of time. One imagines that Norton’s Italian connections regarding making frames for the Commando might have come in handy. Importantly, the Rambler was the very first road/trail bike to arrive with a monoshock, offering the new owner considerable bragging rights. The rest of the bike used some high-quality componentry, too. There was a long shock absorber running under the tank, a set of Marzocchi front forks, reworked Yamaha instruments with NVT branding, Dunlop trials Universal tyres and a very groovy blended-together tank and seat, also sourced in Italy. In fact, about 20 different Italian companies provided parts for the Rambler.

The other big deal with the Rambler was the front brake – something that split opinion. It had a powerful and high-quality Grimeca disc front brake. Those who knew their trail bikes hummed and hawed and spluttered at this. Disc brakes? On a trail bike? That would be far too insensitive for off-road use and get clogged with mud and dust, surely? But NVT understood its market. These bikes weren’t going to go off-road, unless the teenage pilot was taking a detour across some fields after a night in the pub. The disc was far better than the sparse braking on rival machines and much more useful on the road. A Rambler would come to a halt in half the distance of its Japanese rivals.

Recognising that Italian paint quality wasn’t quite as good as it might be, the parts that came in from the continent were finished by the same people who had been painting Commandos and T160 Tridents, and the finish was very good indeed. The side panels were plastic, and the petrol tank held barely a gallon, partly because the monoshock restricted the space available.

The exhaust was designed by NVT, then made by Lafranconi and also finished in the UK. It was given a look similar to that on the old BSA 250 and 500 unit singles. This did cause some issues as Yamaha’s original exhaust curved tightly at the bottom of the barrel, swooping upwards and tucking itself under the seat. Putting the pipe along the bottom of the engine affected two things: the kick-start had to be awkwardly kinked to clear the pipe;





### SPECIFICATION – BSA Tracker 125/175

**ENGINE:** 123/171cc torque induction two-stroke **BORE/STROKE:** 56mm/50mm 66/50mm **CARBURATION:** SINGLE MIKUNI **COMPRESSION:** 7.2/6.8:1 **TRANSMISSION:** Six-speed gearbox **IGNITION:** Flywheel magneto/CDI **FRONT WHEEL:** 2.75 x 21in **REAR WHEEL:** 3.50 x 18 **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Marzocchi hydraulic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Single shock cantilever **FRONT BRAKE:** 160mm drum **REAR BRAKE:** 140mm drum **LENGTH:** 84in (2133mm) **SEAT HEIGHT:** 29.5in (750mm) **WHEELBASE:** 52.5in (1320mm) **DRY WEIGHT:** 210lb (94kg) **FUEL TANK:** 1.2 gallons **POWER:** 14/16bhp **TOP SPEED:** 165/70mph

Thanks to the BSA Owners' Club; Jeff Allen, from the BSAOC Archive, for providing the Rambler/Tracker production records and sales brochures; and Danny Capaldi, of DC Restorations and Vapour Blasting Services, for access to his Tracker.

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**SPARES**

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and on the 175, Yamaha had big cut-outs on the cylinder head to accommodate the high pipe which were not needed with the low pipe and made the Rambler's engine look unbalanced. The Yamaha badging was machined off the engine casings and replaced by an NVT sticker.

The headlight was a CEV with a rubber shell and the taillight was the CEV unit used by every Italian manufacturer at the time. Indicators were Yamaha, as was the switchgear. And the front mudguard was tight around the front wheel, an unlikely location for mud plugging. Understanding the market, the Rambler came with a rack, ideal for bungy-ing your school bag to.

NVT made clear in advertising literature who the bike was made for: "NVT took a long hard look at the street/trail market before we embarked on our Rambler project. It is a young man's market – these single-cylinder dual purpose devices – but the buyers know their machines through and through; all in all, they're a pretty discerning bunch. Not all of them ride on the rough but they like to know the bike will do it, if required. They demand looks and performance for town riding, plus the specification of a twin-cylinder sports machine for that trip into the country. So, our brief was to provide all the obvious qualities that the British companies do best. Things like a frame that, from the very first weld, is designed to handle with a capital H!

"Lighter too, and more rigid than the opposition. Next came the general geometry. We chose a compact 52.5in wheelbase, dialled in plenty of suspension movement, and arranged everything else to give a riding position that felt right, for everyone – at least, all those in the 5ft 4in to 5ft 10in mould! Oh yes, some of our test riding was done with a slip of a girl on the back, so no worries there..."

Ramblers were made at Shenstone, Canley, and Garretts Green in the English Midlands.

An NVT Rambler cost the same as a Yamaha or Suzuki of similar spec, with the added attraction of that disc front brake and cheaper delivery prices.

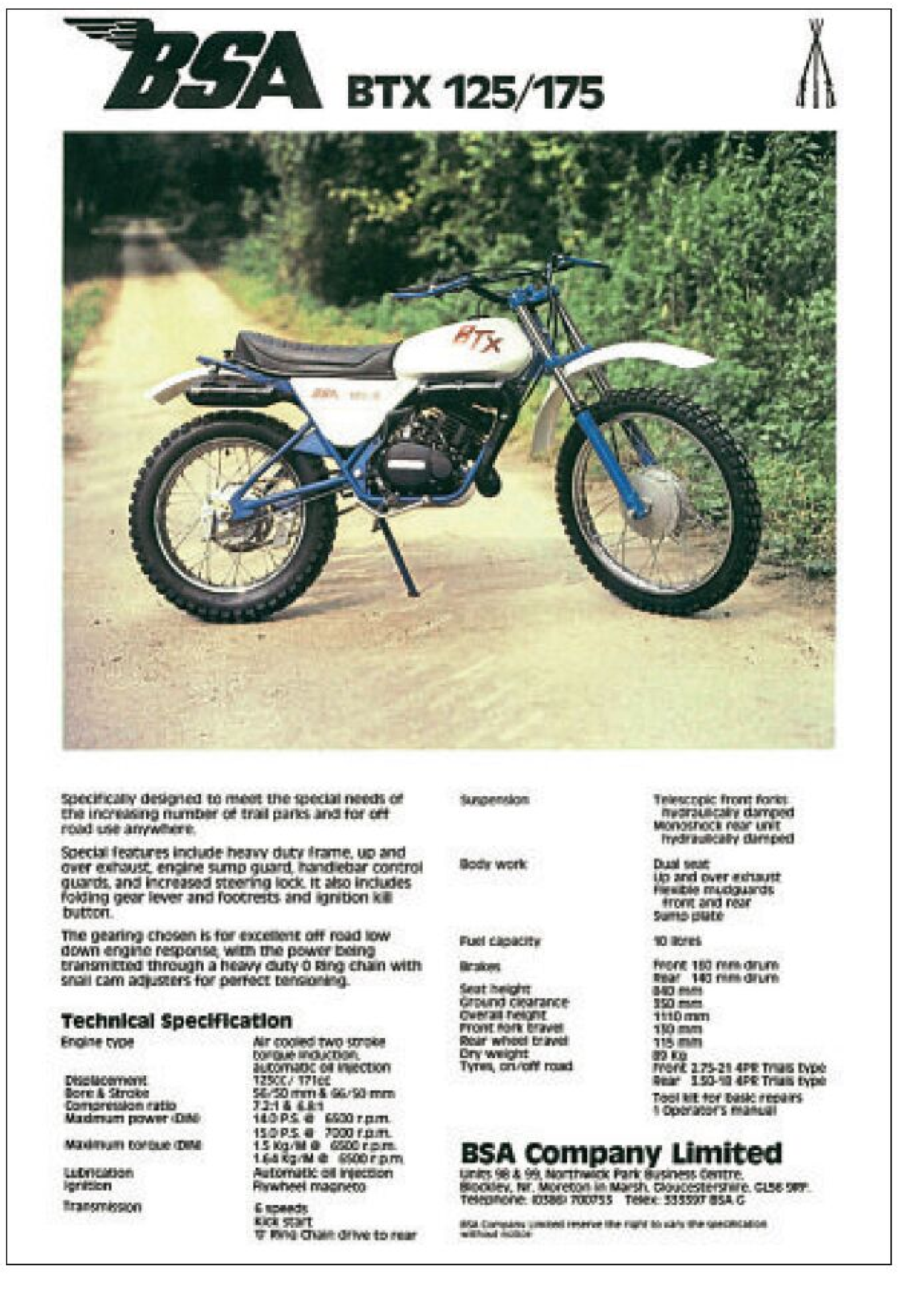
## The end of NVT and the return of BSA

The Rambler sold moderately well for a few years as it gave NVT dealers something to put in their showrooms. One small South Wales bike shop, Kelsons, bought 25 175s in a single shipment.

In the late 1970s, with NVT in trouble for the last time, a new BSA company was formed, run by Bertie Goodman (once of Velocette) and US BSA aficionado Bill Colquhoon, who bought the BSA name and the NVT designs. In late 1979, the last machines badged as NVT Ramblers were made. The Rambler got a revamp, becoming the BSA Tracker 125/6 and 175/6.

These trail bikes were the last full-sized BSA machines offered for the road made in the Midlands. Almost identical to the Rambler, the new BSA Tracker's biggest change was the dropping of the

➡



BSA BTX 125/175

Specifically designed to meet the special needs of the increasing number of trail parks and for off road use anywhere.

Special features include heavy duty frame, up and over exhaust, engine sump guard, handlebar control guards, and increased steering lock. It also includes folding gear lever and footrests and ignition kill button.

The gearing chosen is for excellent off road low down engine response, with the power being transmitted through a heavy duty O Ring chain with snail cam adjusters for perfect tensioning.

**Technical Specification**

| | |
|---|---|
| Engine type | Air cooled two stroke torque induction, automatic oil injection |
| Displacement | 125cc / 171cc |
| Bore & Stroke | 56/50 mm & 66/50 mm |
| Compression ratio | 7.2:1 & 6.8:1 |
| Maximum power (DIN) | 14.0 P.S. @ 6500 r.p.m.<br>15.0 P.S. @ 7000 r.p.m. |
| Maximum torque (DIN) | 1.5 Kg/M @ 6500 r.p.m.<br>1.64 Kg/M @ 6500 r.p.m. |
| Lubrication | Automatic oil injection |
| Ignition | Flywheel magneto |
| Transmission | 6 speeds<br>Kick start<br>'O' Ring Chain drive to rear |
| Suspension | Telescopic front forks hydraulically damped<br>Monoshock rear unit hydraulically damped |
| Body work | Dual seat<br>Up and over exhaust<br>Flexible mudguards front and rear<br>Sump plate |
| Fuel capacity | 10 litres |
| Brakes | Front 150 mm drum<br>Rear 140 mm drum |
| Seat height | 840 mm |
| Ground clearance | 350 mm |
| Overall height | 1110 mm |
| Front fork travel | 150 mm |
| Rear wheel travel | 115 mm |
| Dry weight | 89 kg |
| Tyres, on/off road | Front 2.75-21 4PR Trials type<br>Rear 3.50-18 4PR Trials type |
| | Tool kit for basic repairs<br>1 Operator's manual |

**BSA Company Limited**
Units 98 & 99, Northwick Park Business Centre,
Blockley, Nr. Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire. GL56 9RF.
Telephone: (0386) 700755 Telex: 333597 BSA G

BSA Company Limited reserve the right to vary the specification without notice

expensive Grimeca front disc in favour of a smaller, more conventional drum brake. The front mudguard was changed to a high motocross type and the indicators went matt black. A short pipe was fitted at the end of the exhaust, blanked off at the end, with two holes directing the exhausts gases and unburnt two-stroke oil down and away from the rear mudguard, which had been plastered with black deposits previously. A handful of Trackers were sent abroad to Ireland, Malta, the Falkland Islands, Malaysia and Argentina.

In 1983, the UK Government put a spanner in the works, banning learners from anything bigger than a 125, which rather damaged the potential for sales of 175cc bikes.

Fortunately, BSA got some help from some rather more welcome government intervention. With international aid funding, the BSA Tracker was provided to Third World countries including to Kenya and Sudan, with the biggest order, for 100 bikes, being shipped to Ethiopia in late 1981 to be supplied to healthcare workers. Elsewhere in this area of the world, BSA's name still held some weight and deliveries continued abroad, funded by the Crown Agents, a UK government relief agency. BSA moved to Moreton-in-Marsh, in the leafy Cotswolds, in 1986, where a former army base had been converted into an industrial estate. Here the last BSA-Yamaha-engined two-strokes were made, including an off-road-only version of the Tracker which was sold in the UK as the BSA BTX 125-6/175-6. This was basically a Tracker with all the road-legal trimmings removed and a Yamaha exhaust. It was advertised as being suitable for "trail parks and off-road use anywhere."

## What did you get with a Tracker?

The Rambler/Tracker's motor was the same as the Yamaha version, though the gearing was slightly different, with changes to the sprockets. The Rambler handled better than the original Yamaha 175, though by the time the Tracker arrived, the DT175 had got its own excellent cantilever frame. The Marzocchi front forks were originally used on small Moto Morini models, matching the firmly sprung rear end, this pairing benefitting the handling generally.

> ***"As well as improving off-road performance, changing to a drum lightened the front end and consequently the Rambler's ability to wheelie – vital for a machine aimed at the youth market."***

It had a rubber 25/25 watt, a pretty feeble 6v CEV headlamp, and the ignition on the 125 was flywheel magneto, while the 175 used CDI. There was a 4amp/hour 6v battery which seems to be there to power the indicators. The Yamaha oil tank was tucked away neatly under the seat. With British motorcycle design long plagued by vibration worries, a lot of effort was put into the use of rubber anti-vibration mounting points. The seat was wide but rather too short for the comfortable transportation of two people and mounting the pillion rests on the bottom run of the swingarm meant that any passenger needed very flexible knee joints, but this was a feature of many trail bikes of the day.

The tank had a range of about 60 miles, so it was not the steed of choice for any cross-country trips. The Tracker's drum brake didn't match the Rambler's disc for power, but was more useful if you did go off-road, and the stiffness of the chassis and the sparseness of the construction made it all work well. As well as improving off-road performance, changing to a drum lightened the front end and consequently the Rambler's ability to wheelie – vital for a machine aimed at the youth market.

## This one is Danny's

Danny Capaldi first saw this BSA Tracker 175-6 in 2012 in a friend's collection when providing him with parts for a Kawasaki H1. Danny said: "I'd met Hywel, the owner, on the Moto Piston rally in Spain, and he invited me round. As soon as I saw the BSA, I asked if I could buy it off him, but he said no, he would never sell it."

When Hywel died, Danny was asked to appraise the collection for sale and was finally able to buy the little BSA. "It was just a dirty version of what you see now. I've just de-rusted the tank and sealed it, cleaned it up, and given it a tweak. And I put the 'Made In England' sticker on the frame to wind-up all my British bike-owning friends.

"It's got Italian wheels and forks, and a Yamaha engine and electrics, so it rides lovely. You could start it by pushing the kick-start with your hand. The drum front brake is a bit… meh. It's not the best. But I'm never going to take it on the dirt. It is a pleasant little runaround."

With under 8000 miles on the clock, the Tracker's origins are unclear. Although a late 1979 manufacture bike and one of the first of the Trackers, where it lived during the early part of its life is unknown. The only things that are not stock are the large BSA tank badges and the headlight, which looks more like a custom bike unit than NVT's original rubber-shelled CEV unit.

Danny, who is listed as the second owner, said: "The DVLA says there are only two 175s on the road in the UK and it's nice that this one is getting used."

There is even a possibility that it will be Danny's bike of choice at this year's Moto Piston rally.

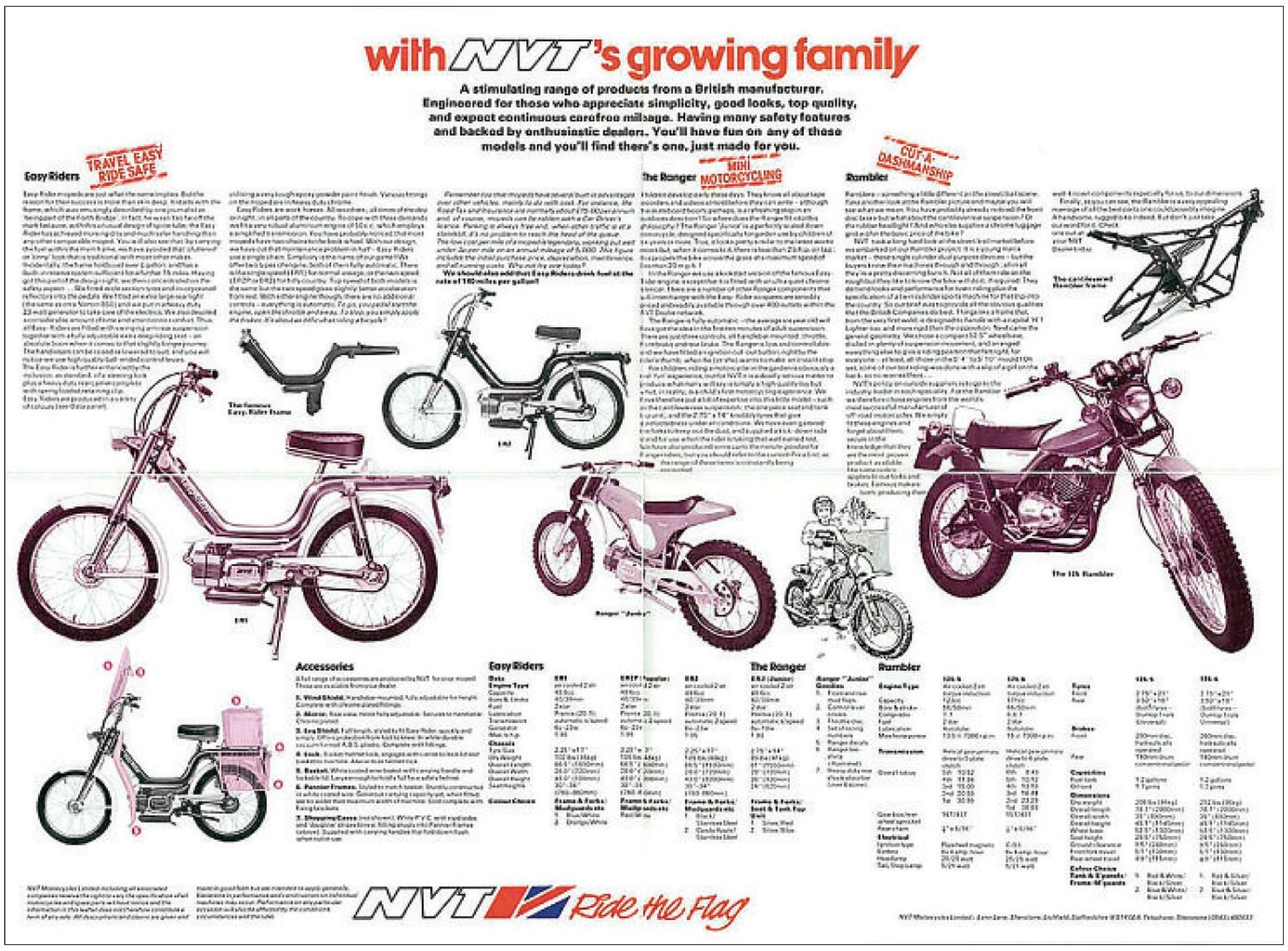
## BSA's bikes in the 1980s

When the new BSA company took over NVT, the Easy Rider mopeds were rebadged as BSA, but the ER4 sports moped, a four-speed version with a hinged dummy tank, was dropped. Instead, a smaller, lighter version of the Rambler/Tracker frame ➡

## National Motorcycle Museum now has a Rambler!

al Motorcycl
here Legends Li

As we were putting this together, James at the National Motorcycle Museum got in touch to say the museum had just picked up its own BSA from storage to get it restored. So, there should be one of these historic bikes for all to see very soon!



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The 125 Rambler
Accessories
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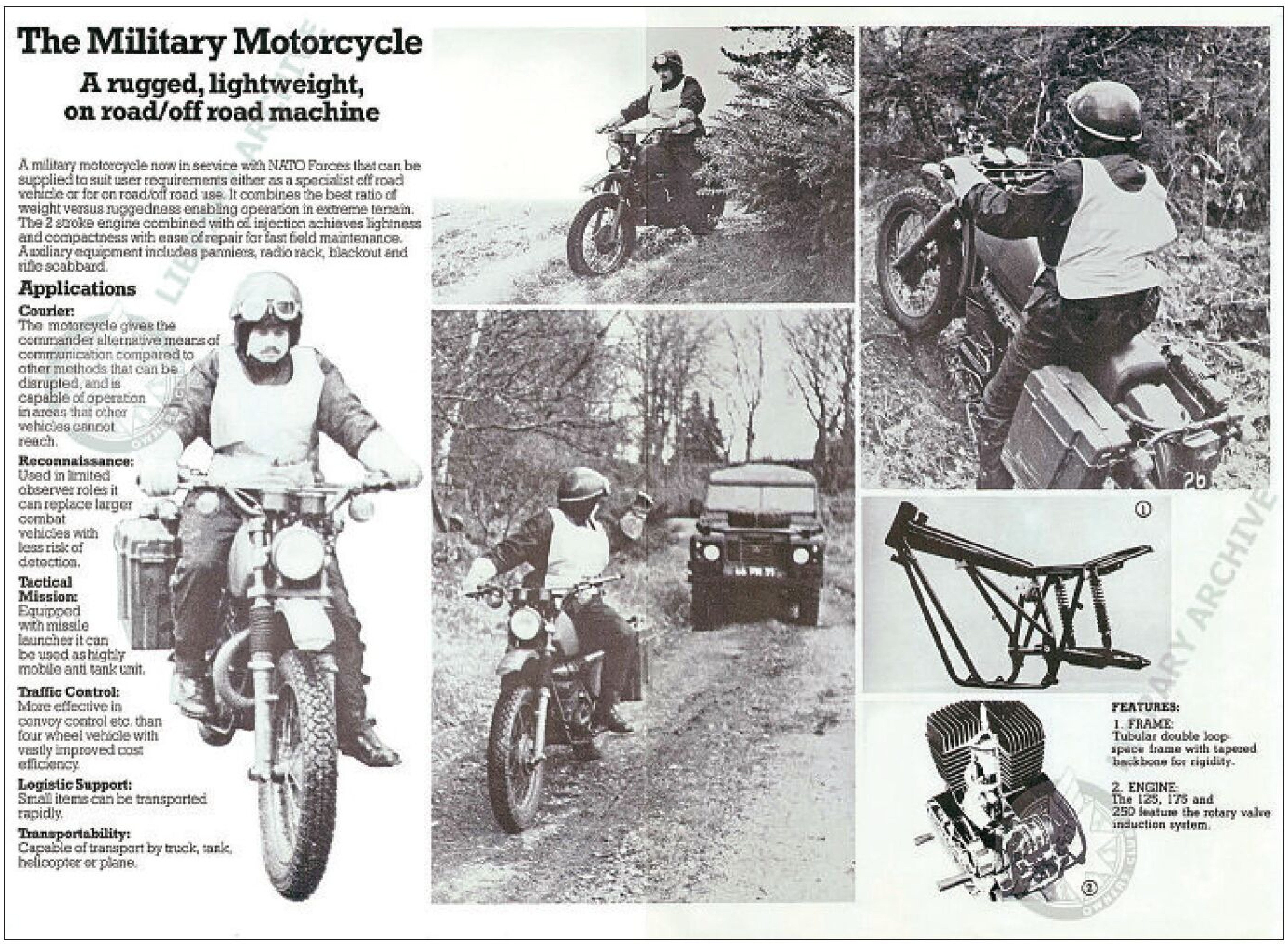

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**Applications**

**Courier:** The motorcycle gives the commander alternative means of communication compared to other methods that can be disrupted, and is capable of operation in areas that other vehicles cannot reach.

**Reconnaissance:** Used in limited observer roles it can replace larger combat vehicles with less risk of detection.

**Tactical Mission:** Equipped with missile launcher it can be used as highly mobile anti tank unit.

**Traffic Control:** More effective in convoy control etc. than four wheel vehicle with vastly improved cost efficiency.

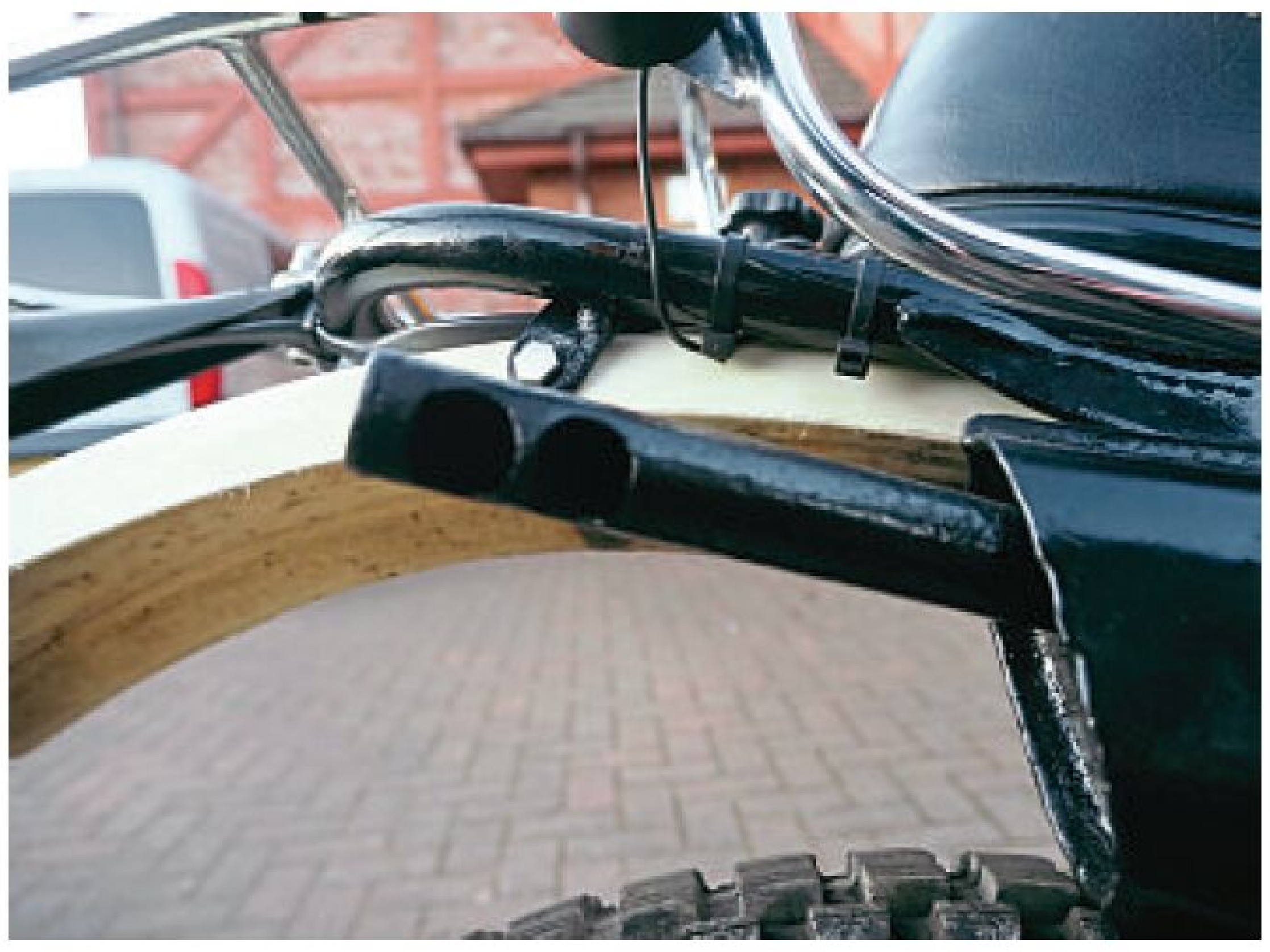
**Logistic Support:** Small items can be transported rapidly.

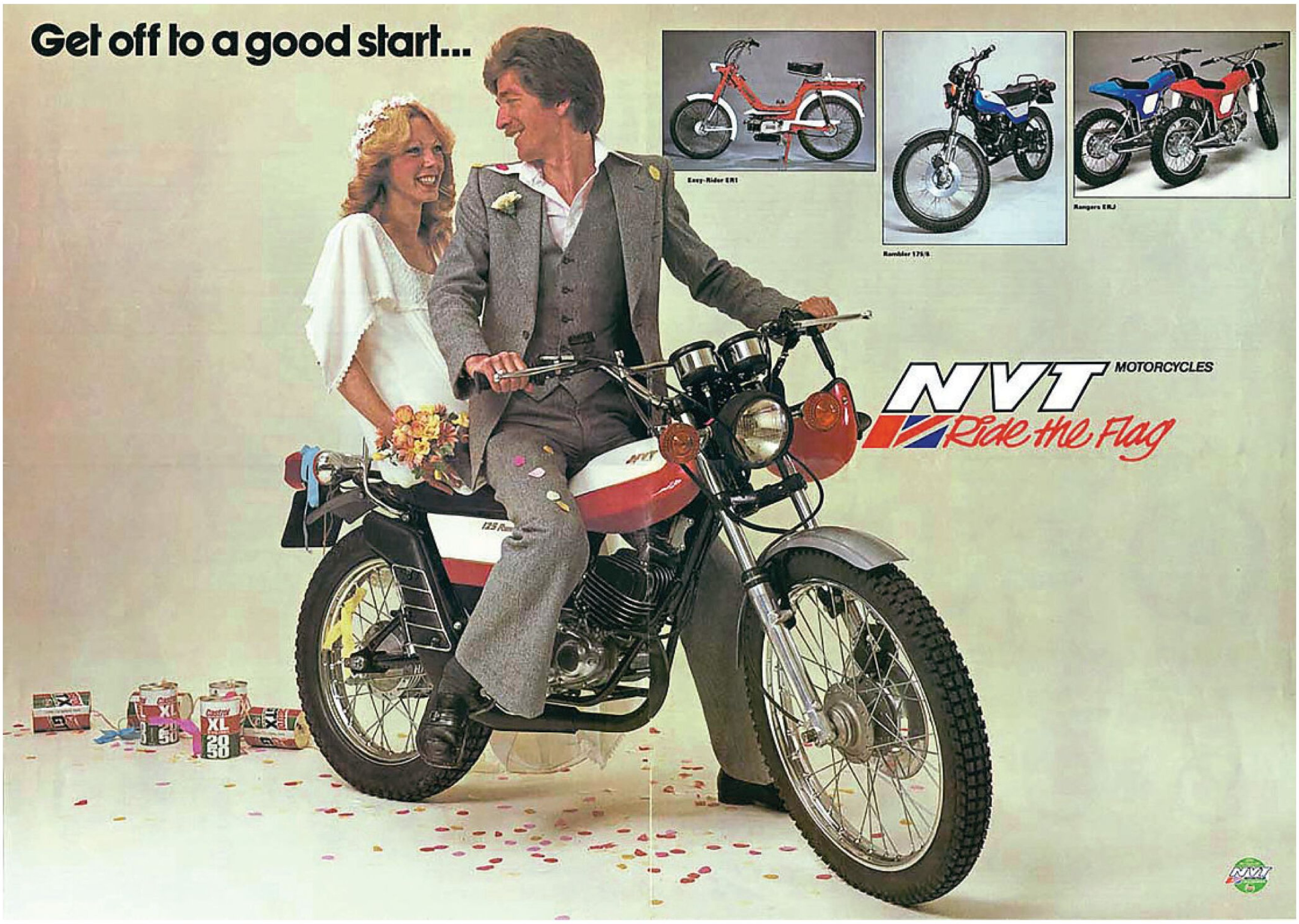
**Transportability:** Capable of transport by truck, tank, helicopter or plane.

**FEATURES:**

1. FRAME: Tubular double loop-space frame with tapered backbone for rigidity.

2. ENGINE: The 125, 175 and 250 feature the rotary valve induction system.





was pressed into service as the home for a Franco Morini 50cc engine, as used in several Italian sports mopeds. With all sixteener mopeds now limited to 35mph, the appearance of a machine in that class was more important than the performance and the BSA sports 50s were very cute. To cut costs, these bikes were given smaller wheels, cheaper CEV switchgear, more basic instruments and drum brakes front and rear.

The models were known as the Brigand for the trail bike and the Beaver for the roadster, and as well as these there were the unrestricted Boxer and the GT50. The GT50 was also sold in India in some numbers and eventually put together at a plant there owned by the Brooke Bond tea company.

BSA was also assembling Can-Am Bombardier 250cc two-stroke military machines for the British Army to replace their ageing B40 singles. The poky Can Am was something of a revelation for squaddies used to the pedestrian four-stroke singles. BSA used home-produced components as much as possible, including tanks, wheels, tyres, lights and panniers. The Army bought 1000 of these machines and many ended up in civilian hands, though private owners did experience some issues as the workshop manual was unavailable due to it being covered by the Official Secrets Act.

An international aid programme gave BSA another throw of the dice in the mid-1980s, and it was Yamaha which again provided the means. They supplied Yamaha XT125 singles and AG two-stroke farm bikes in kit form, put together with BSA tank badges applied and shipped as the BSA 125/4 for the XT and BSA Bushman for the two-strokes.

BSA was sold again, became BSA Regal, and was relocated to Southampton, where kids' bikes were made, along with a very classy Yamaha SR500-engined café racer. A prototype 1000cc parallel twin with a Wasp-Rhind-Tutt was produced but sadly never made it out of development hell. And that was it, until... CBG

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# Helping the future learn from the past

With our Old Bike Mechanics Directory pointing to help, there are also those out there helping us to help ourselves. We chat to the Renaissance Motor Cycle Workshop

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROGER HENDERSON

RENAISSANCE MOTORCYCLE
WORKSHOP
JAWA
MACHINING, WELDING, WHEEL BUILDING, ELECTRICS,
BENCH HIRE

Last month we went to see one of the big players of our world and how it is increasing its workshop facilities. That prompted Roger Henderson, of the Renaissance Motor Cycle Workshop, in Addingham, West Yorkshire, to get in touch. His view is the same – that the skills and knowledge need to be kept up, but instead of getting others to do any work needed on your bike, if you're so inclined, Roger can help you learn to do it yourself, and he gives you the space and equipment to actually try.

Renaissance has been running for 20 years and is a teaching workshop, offering classes in both maintenance and restoration, specialising just in bikes. No one needs any previous experience, and having more than 60 years on the job, Roger previously being the boss of Keighley Technical College's motorcycle maintenance classes, you are sure to pick things up quickly.

To start, you become a member, then you simply pay £90 per month, and you also pay for your own materials. Space is at a premium, so booking is a must – Roger kindly

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*“Youngsters don’t have to pay the member’s rate – for them, it’s free to join. It’s an important part for Roger, showing his commitment to helping everyone learn new skills and wanting new riders to embrace the world we all love.”*

took these photos once everyone had gone home! Consider the cost of a lock-up – and that doesn’t include all the knowledge, tools, or even electricity. This is a perfect way to learn and gain confidence.

Renaissance is run as a charity and keeps costs low, though it has had to increase the size of its premises; it moved from its first workshop in Dalton Mills after a dreadful flood down the road to the current workshop, and there’s another space being made ready as we speak.

There are about 20 bike benches available, though obviously they must be booked in advance. There are also grinders, mills, welders, and a lathe, though you have to be checked for competency and safety if you’ve had experience before, or you can be taught until everyone’s happy.

There are people who just pop in, and there are those who are restoring a bike, like the MZ you see here, which was found in a garden with the engine filled with earth! It looks stunning but is being held up by a small electrical gremlin which they think they’ve got sorted.

Youngsters don’t have to pay the member’s rate – for them, it’s free to join. It’s an important part for Roger, showing his commitment to helping everyone learn new skills and wanting new riders to embrace the world we all love.

Some people use it for well-being too, perhaps while recovering from illness, and some just love learning new skills. Roger used to help those the education system had forgotten or left behind… and their bikes have won prizes at Stafford before.

And it’s not just local people. One member had looked around online for a similar idea and couldn’t find one, so moved to the UK for six months to use the workshops and learn! Now that’s a commute.

Renaissance goes much further than learning how to fix a clutch or lace a tyre. One gentleman was struggling to kick over his heavy bike, so he designed his own electronic ignition that works so well. He just has to jab at the kick-start now – so the like-minded people you meet are just as important.

Working on your bike and learning new skills is such an enlightening thing to do. And with several people using their bike work as therapy, you could say the ambiance is a truly positive one – unless someone hits their thumb with a spanner!

If you’re in the Leeds, Bradford, Blackburn area, this could be one of your greatest discoveries. See Renaissance Motor Cycle Workshop on Facebook or email Roger at: rogerjhenderson@btinternet.com

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# Britain's moped men

Need an excuse for a big smile? Get a small engine! We look at the enormous fun the world of Cyclemotors can bring...

**Words and photos by** Phillip Tooth, with great **thanks to** the East Anglian Cyclemotor Club (autocycle.org.uk)

IT ALL BEGAN WAY BACK IN 1981 WHEN four friends started the East Anglian Cyclemotor Club. Three of them are still involved – including secretary Andrew Roddham. "People who come to our events are impressed by our friendliness, enthusiasm and informality. We hold about 20 rallies a year and try to be as well-organised and professional as we can, and a lot of work goes into making our events fun!" With nearly 900 members, the EACC must be doing something right. We joined more than 50 riders on the Radar Run, a tour of the Suffolk coastline, to catch up with some of them.

### Andrew Roddham: Power Pak

There are 10 motorcycles in Andrew's garage, including an American-made Zero SR/F all-electric, 130mph projectile. But when you hear him talk about his Power Pak, there is no doubt that he has just as much fun riding this 50cc cyclemotor. "I finished the rebuild just before Covid and used it to deliver bread and pastries around the village during lockdown. Since then, I've covered nearly 2500 miles."

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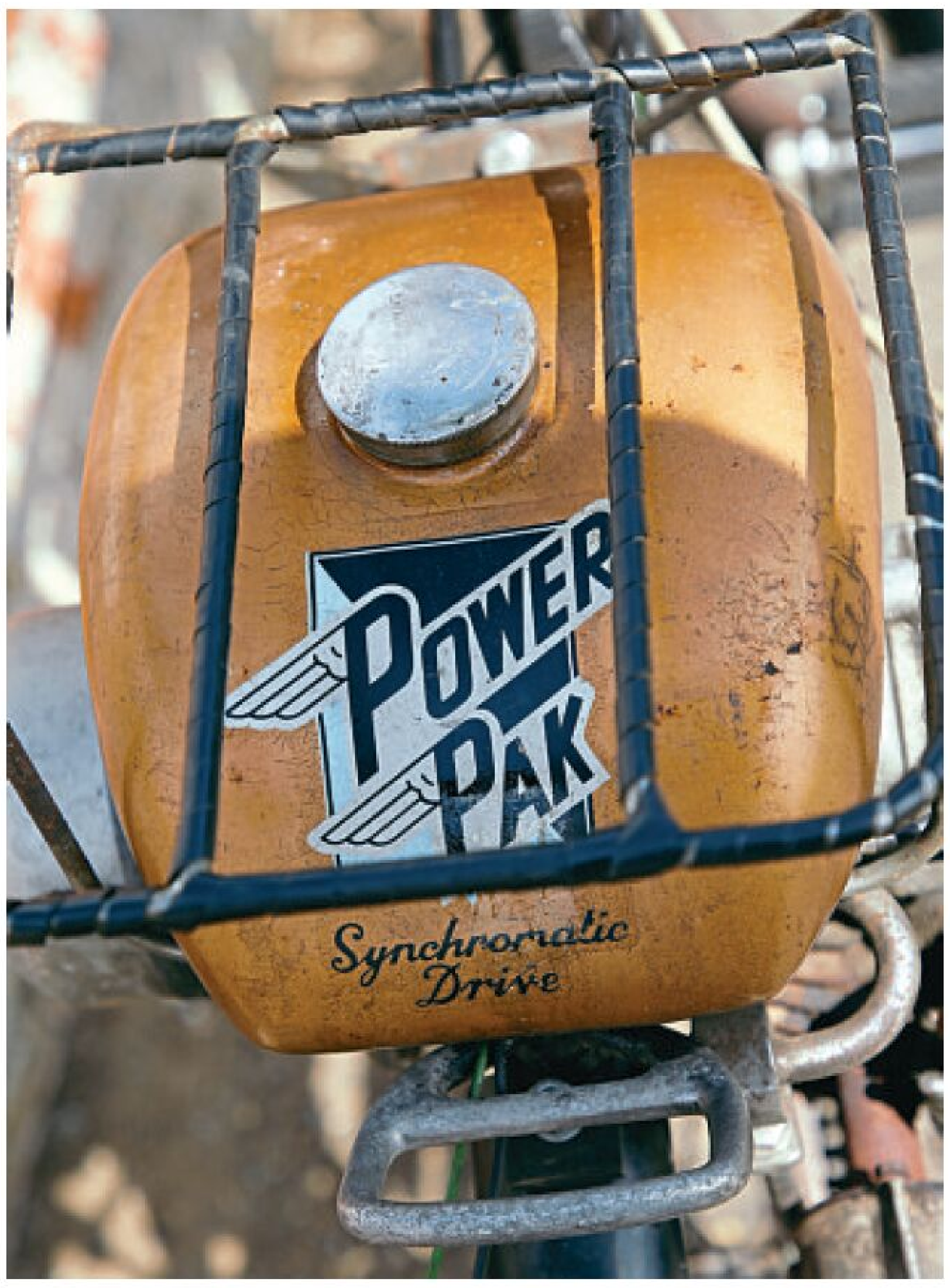
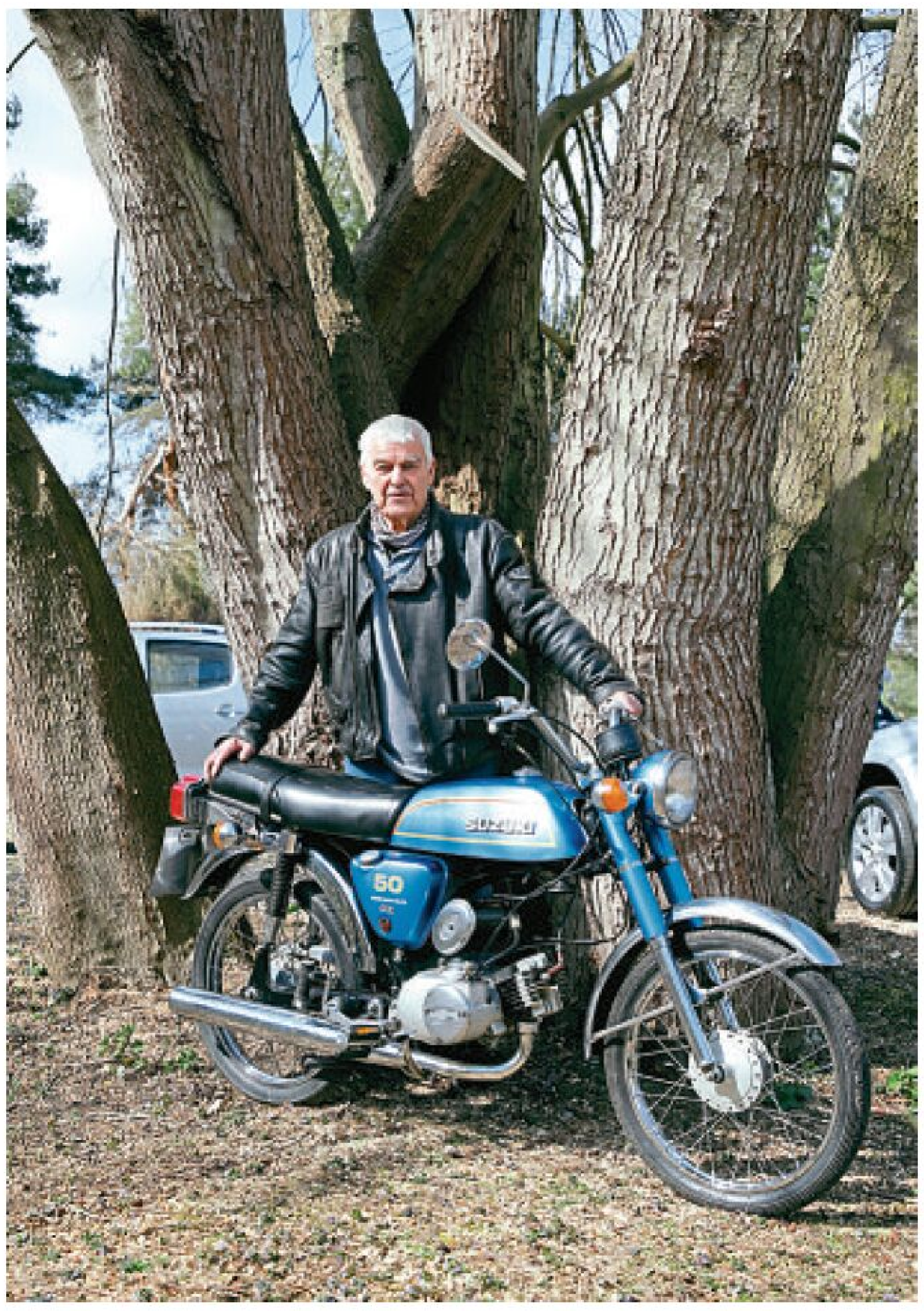




Made by Sinclair Goddard of London, the Power Pak is mounted above the rear wheel with the three-port, two-stroke deflector piston engine hanging from the right side and the cylinder pointing down. Drive is through a friction roller. Andrew has the top-of-the range Synchromatic version, which comes with a gold-painted fuel tank and a clutch operated by the throttle twistgrip. And it's a proven design: in 1953, Peter Lee-Warner completed a 13,621-mile round-the-world trip on the same model, through 13 countries, five deserts, and even a plague of locusts in Iraq. The Power Pak averaged 162mpg and Peter reported no mechanical problems, so you can understand why Andrew managed the Radar Run without any trouble!

### Barry Smith: Suzuki A50P

Suzuki's 50cc disc-valve motorcycle had been thrashed around Continental Europe since the late 1960s but wasn't classed as a moped in the UK, so 16-year-olds were banned from using one. That all changed in 1975 when the A50 got pedals especially for the UK market and so it became the A50P (yes, that's P for pedals). Lubrication was taken care of by an oil pump with a variable output controlled by engine speed and twistgrip position. Suzuki called it CCI – Controlled Crankshaft Injection. At the time, it was the only sports moped with pump-fed lubrication – all others used petrol and oil mixed in the tank.

This A50P is Barry's first restoration, and he's made a great job of it. "I used to have one when I was a teenager," he explained. "Thanks to the five-speed gearbox, it was faster than my mate's Yamaha. It really loved to rev!"

### Chris Evans: Mobylette AV76

Monsieur Mobylette, Chris has no fewer than 14 of the French mopeds in his collection. "It's not an addiction," he pleaded. "Tell me it's not!"

He is particularly proud of this original paint AV76 of 1961 vintage. It was found in a barn in Shropshire, with the tax disc showing that it was last on the road in 1976. Chris bought it 40 years later and set about checking over the engine and ignition, replacing the wheel bearings and tyres, and fitting new handlebar grips along with a more comfortable saddle. He sensibly left the paint as found, savouring the patina.

PIFCO SuperSonic

GDD 180
AUTOBYK

The transfer/decal/badge of Motor Imports, London – the official UK importer – remains on the frame, while the British-made Pifco SuperSonic battery-powered horn graces the handlebar. “The regulations insisted that the horn had to work even if the engine wasn’t running,” explained Chris, “so the Pifco was fitted by the importer.”

He isn’t the only enthusiast who likes this AV76. “It won Best In Show at the Mobylette Club UK display,” he said. Yes, Chris. It’s an addiction!

### Dave Watson: Excelsior Autobyk

When George H Jones designed the 98cc two-stroke Villiers Junior engine in unit with the primary drive and countershaft clutch, he ushered in the boom years for the autocycle. And the best of the bunch (*for many, Phillip, not all… – Matt*) was the Excelsior Autobyk.

The technical editor of *The Motor Cycle* gave a hint of what was to come when he road-tested a prototype before the official launch in September 1937. Headlined ‘The Simplest Type Of All,’ he predicted the success of ‘motor-assisted bicycles’ – perfect for those who couldn’t afford a motorcycle or simply wanted cheap transport.

“It will cruise all day at 25mph,” said Dave, owner of this 1945 . “Top speed is almost 40, but I wouldn’t like to hold it at that for too long!” The fork is made from Reynolds 531 tubing; the same stuff as used on Manx Norton frames. Fat rubber bands provide the suspension. “There are 400mm drum brakes front and rear. The front works okay but I have to put all my weight on the back-pedal to have any effect on the rear.”

### John Wells: NSU Quickly

Check out this Quickly and you’ll soon realise why autocycles didn’t stand

➡

NO PARKING
BEG 844

a chance. NSU added swingarm rear suspension for 1964, and John's model has a three-speed gearbox with twistgrip control. "It will hit 30mph in seconds," said John. "Handling is superb!"

### Keith Ashby: New Hudson

Retired school teacher Keith had to set off at 4am to ride the 110 miles from the North Norfolk coast to the East Sussex coast for the 10am start of the rally. He rode home again as well!

### Keith Jobson: Yamaha FS1-E

As a professional financial adviser, you'd expect Keith to know what he's doing when it comes to investing, but even I raised my eyebrows when he told me that he'd paid £8000 for this Yamaha. "Well, I bought a one new in 1976 when I turned 16 years old. It is the last of the unrestricted Fizzies. A year later and the government limited the top speed for mopeds to 30mph." So, how fast did Keith's one really go? "I was clocked at 55mph, but I did seize the piston once." That disc brake would have come in useful!

### Mark Daniels: Raleigh

Raleigh started making bicycles in 1815 but didn't make a moped until 1958. The RM1 used a Sturmey-Archer engine, and so did the RM2. But you can guess how good that was because in October 1960, Raleigh signed a contract with Motobecane to make mopeds under licence. The RM4 Automatic and RM5 Supermatic went on sale in 1961.

"So the RM5 frame with leading-link forks and the angular, detachable panel top-tank were available components in 1963," explained Mark. "If Raleigh had prototyped a concept 'sports' version of the RM5, it could have looked something like this – the RM5-SS."

The motor has a 72.5cc Airsal GAC cylinder kit, which means it's compressing an additional 22.5cc into the same 5.5cc head space, pushing the standard 9:1 compression ratio up to 12:1. The original H14 carburettor has been replaced by a Dell'orto SHA15/15C with a 1mm bigger venturi diameter.

"Power output of the original AV89 engine was 2.7bhp, so the new output is probably well over 3bhp." added Mark. "The gearing ratio has also been increased by 8.3% by changing the rear sprocket from 48 teeth, down to 44 teeth." And this Raleigh really flies!

### Martin Naggs: Honda CT90 Trail 90

"This is my daily ride," said Martin. "You can go anywhere on one of these." Designed for the American market, where it was named the Hunter, the handlebars can be turned in-line with the frame thanks to a serrated alloy clamp and quick-release lever. "Hunters could strap it to the back of their SUV and drive to their hunting ground then lift it off and ride the woodland trails,"

HONDA
TRAIL 90

5.65 XVR
New Hudson

he explained. “The Australian post office used them as well, so Aussies call them the Postie.” Another American import, this is a 1970 model.

*(Want to know more about the CT90? Check out NathanMillward.com who rode his, called Dorothy, from Sydney back to London, then from New York to Alaska – Matt).*

**Mike Bugg: New Hudson**

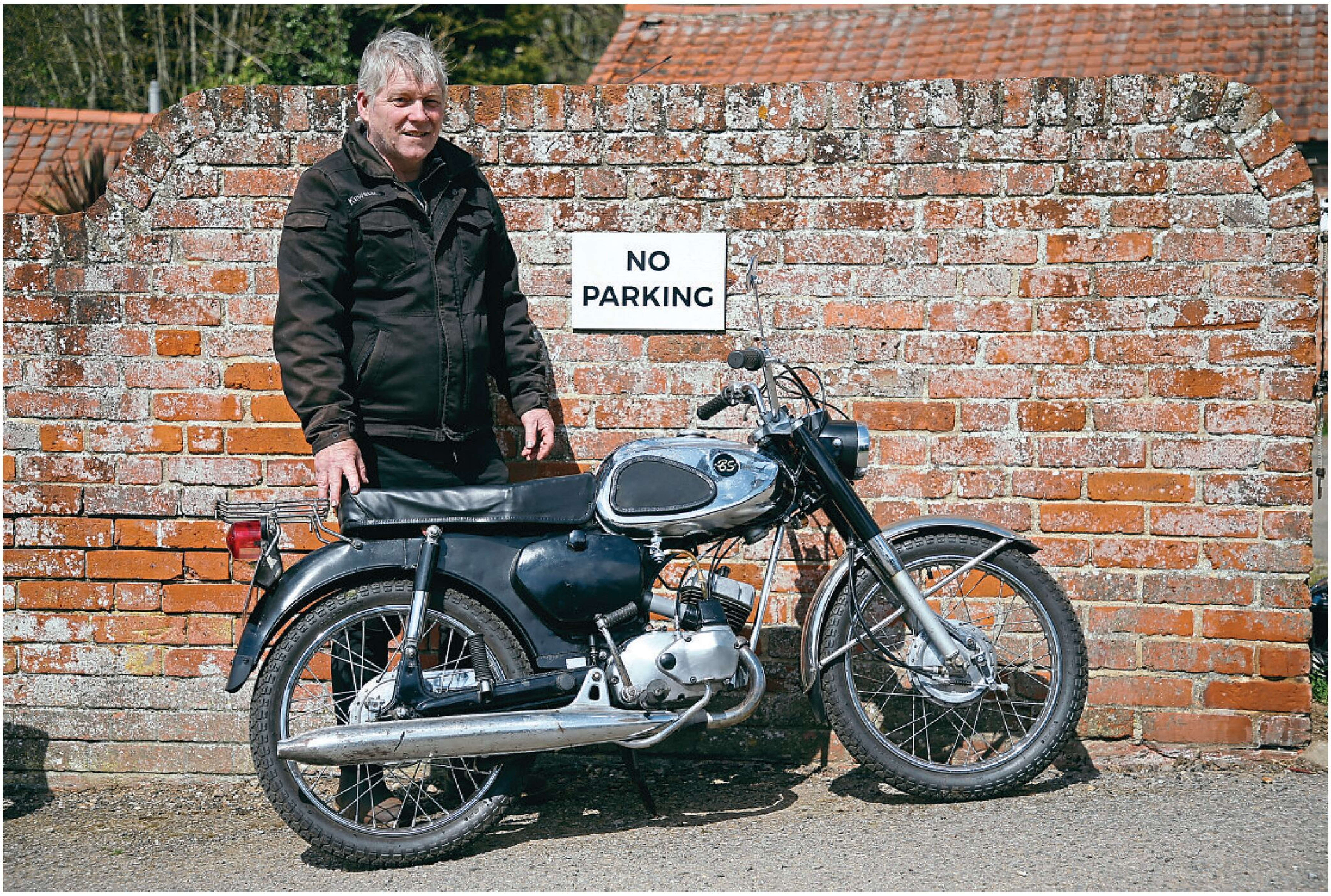
Another autocycle with a Villiers engine, but this time a vertical cylinder 2F, this 1951 New Hudson has been owned by Mike for more than 10 years. “It was an easy nut-and-bolt restoration,” he said. It’s an easy starter if you are fit. Pedal away to the speed of a fast walking pace before engaging the clutch and the engine will respond instantly. But be warned – that requires considerable effort because of the high ratio of the pedalling gear. Alternatively, the easier method with an autocycle is a push-start. Walk alongside with the clutch engaged, then drop the compression release valve and pull in the clutch lever as soon as the engine fires. Now climb on board with as much style as a pensioner wearing a gilet jaune can muster.

“There are either too many handlebar levers or I don’t have enough hands,” joked Mike. “Clutch and front brake levers are on the left and the throttle, rear brake lever and clutch are on the right. Oh, and the clutch lever is fitted with a ratchet to hold the clutch out of engagement when needed. No wonder the Mobylette with its automatic clutch was such a success!”

**Neil Bowen: Yamaha FS1-E**

His Fizzy didn’t cost anything like as much as Keith’s, but then Neil was more interested in fun than finance. “When I was a 16-year-old apprentice I bought one with a blown engine for £40. Whenever you bought a second-hand Fizzy, it always came with a box of worn-out parts because we all thrashed them until they seized.”

YAMAHA
FIZZY



He was stopped by traffic cops on that Baja Brown Yam because his lights weren't working. "Then they found out I didn't have insurance, so my father had to accompany me to the police station. And then I was up before the judge. Fined £240. I was only earning £10 a week. Made an example of me!"

This one is Neil's fifth Fizzy. "I bought all the bits on eBay and did the paintwork myself. The cartoon characters are from VIZ magazine, which started at the end of 1979. All teenage boys were mad about VIZ. Almost a mad as were about Fizzies!"

### Neil Kidby: Bridgestone S90

A club member for more than 25 years, Neil wanted to tell me about his 1963 Honda 50. "It is one of the first imported into the UK!" But I want to talk about his 1965 Bridgestone. "Okay… It was imported from the USA a few years back. The rotary valve engine is really perky and withy a surprisingly wide range of power, but what everyone wants to know about is the gearbox!"

Come on then. Tell us! "My Bridgestone has a four-speed box with a rotary shift pattern. Instead of the gear shift stopping at high gear, one more depression of the shift lever will put it in neutral. Tap it down again and  it is in first gear. The rotary pattern is great in stop-and-go town traffic, but I'm paranoid about missing neutral and going direct from fourth to first!"

➡

**Rudy Graham: Mobylette AV89**

"I had one when I was a teenager," said Rudy, with a big smile. "I restored this one seven years ago, all by myself. I wanted to learn everything about it so that I can always fix it, although it's never let me down." And then he becomes philosophical. "Riding a moped is like sailing. As soon as you let go the mooring you are on your own!"

Rudy is enthusiastic about the EACC. "Belonging to a moped club is a great way to meet like-minded people. And it's always a pleasure to ride with them." CBG

## On the WWW

www.autocycle.org.uk
www.icenicam.org.uk
www.thebuzzingclub.net

## Est-ce que tu parles anglais?

**An autocycle?** Developed between the wars and sold as a complete machine, the autocycle is a lightweight motorcycle with pedals for starting and a clutch but no gearbox. After 1938, most used a 98cc Villiers engine fitted into an open frame, similar to a lady's bicycle. This design changed little until the end of production in the mid-1950s.

**A cyclemotor?** An engine unit designed to be attached somewhere on an existing bicycle, a cyclemotor is usually half the size of an autocycle, but some were as small as 25cc. Also known as clip-ons, motor attachments, or micro-motors, the complete machine was officially a motor-assisted bicycle. That makes sense, because the motor only assisted the rider up hills – they would have to help by using the pedals.

**A moped?** Developed on the Continent during the mid-1950s, this is a 50cc motorcycle with pedals which Brits called a Mo-Ped. The legal definition of a moped stated that the pedals must be able to propel the machine, but even when the law was changed so that 16–year-olds could ride a 50 even if it didn't have pedals, the name stuck. Both the Mobylette and NSU Quickly did with 50cc what the autocycle needed 98cc to do and did it better. They killed off the autocycle... and the cyclemotor as well.

1952 Matchless G80S Ex- Bud Ekins,
Steve McQueen's stunt double
ESTIMATE: £4,000 - £6,000

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*Frank Westworth*

*looks back at:*

# BMW R100R Mystic

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Play Mystic For Me – Frank enjoys the BMW that got away. BMW is often dismissed as being a conservative bike builder, but that is far from the truth. Frank Westworth made time for one of the last air-heads...

**Photos by** Frank Westworth

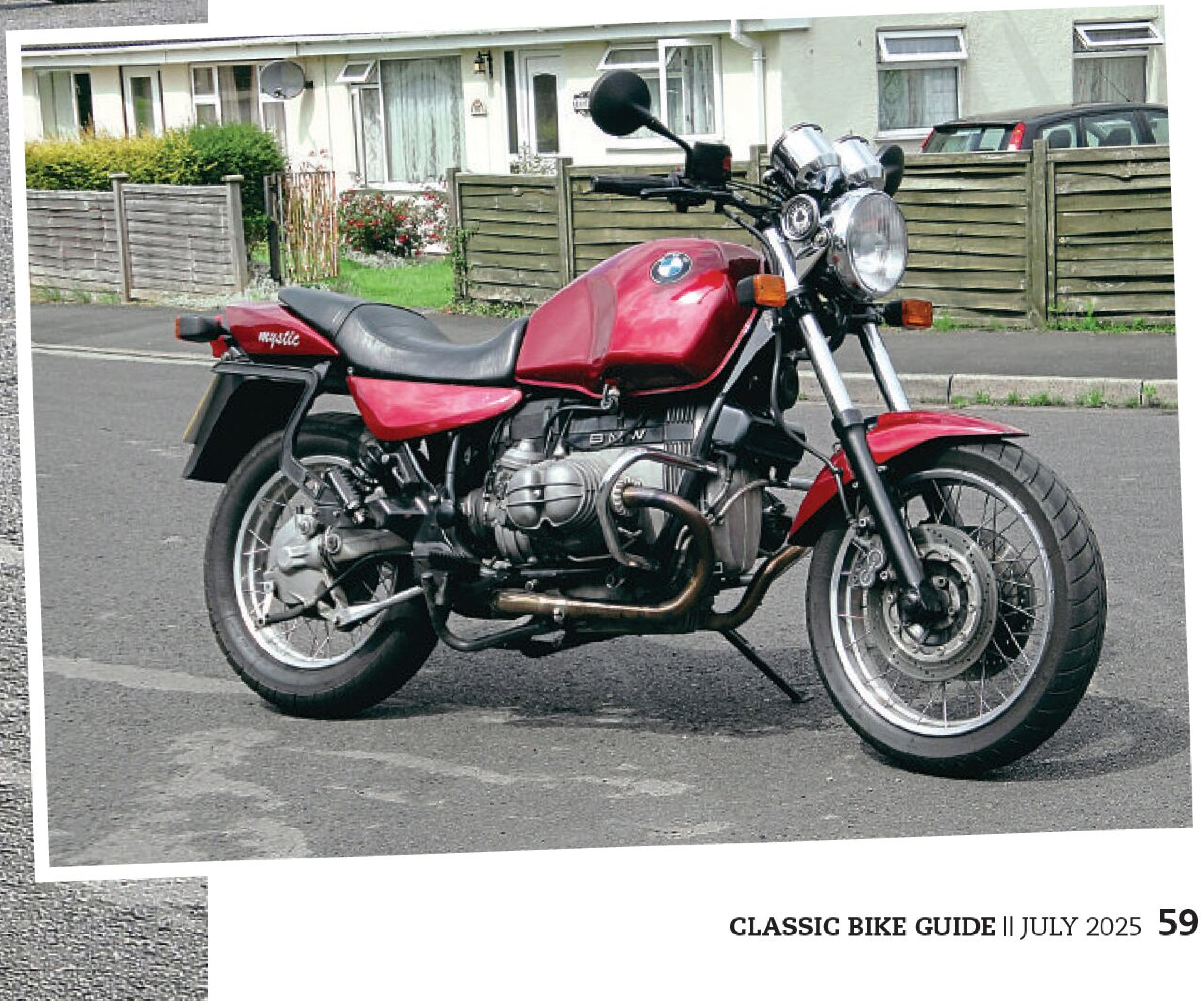
THERE IS A WELL-KNOWN THEORY WHICH SUGGESTS THAT bike builders finally get their bikes exactly right, as perfect as they're going to get, and then immediately celebrate the achievement by ceasing production and introducing something else. Or by going bust. I like this theory, personally, and could quote a whole load of examples to support it. The T160 Trident is one to be going on with. The opposite theory is that the very first version of a machine is closest to the manufacturer's original concept and is therefore the purest. A good example of that would be Sunbeam's S7.

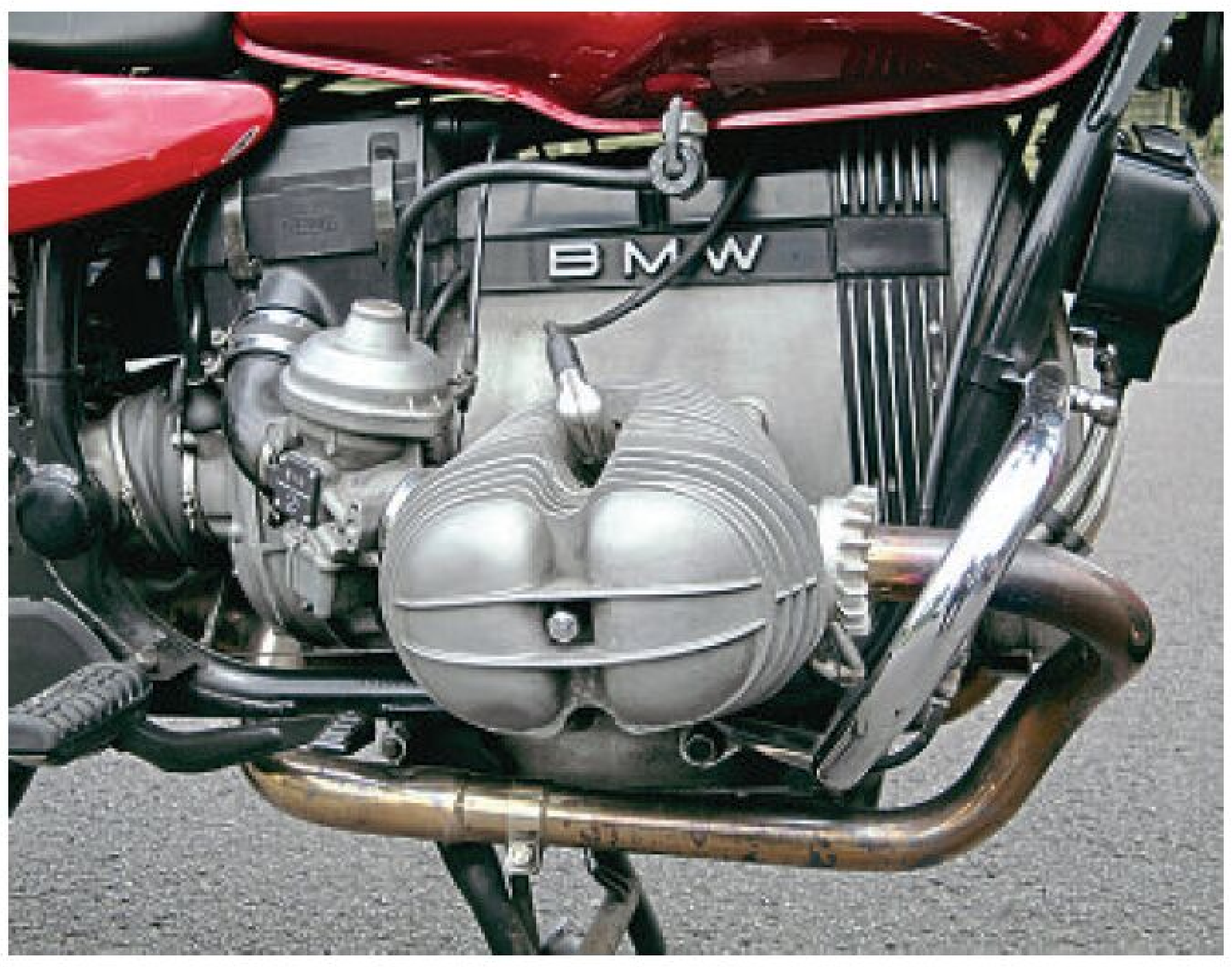
As well as theories, there is a personal appreciation thing. I appreciate manufacturers that have a great idea and stick with it, developing and nurturing it against all opposition. They believe in what they do; they do things their own way. If customers like it – great! If they don't… well, there's always an alternative purchase. This is a risky approach, but it's an honest one. Folk who dare to be different are my own favourites. So, it is a little mystery that in my entire riding life I have owned only a single air-head BMW. And only for a very short time, because although I admired the single-mindedness of its builder, and considered the engineering to be entirely excellent, I just did not enjoy riding the thing, a 1983 R100RS. My brother took it off my trembling hands and still owns it to this day (*obviously a man of taste, your brother… Matt*).

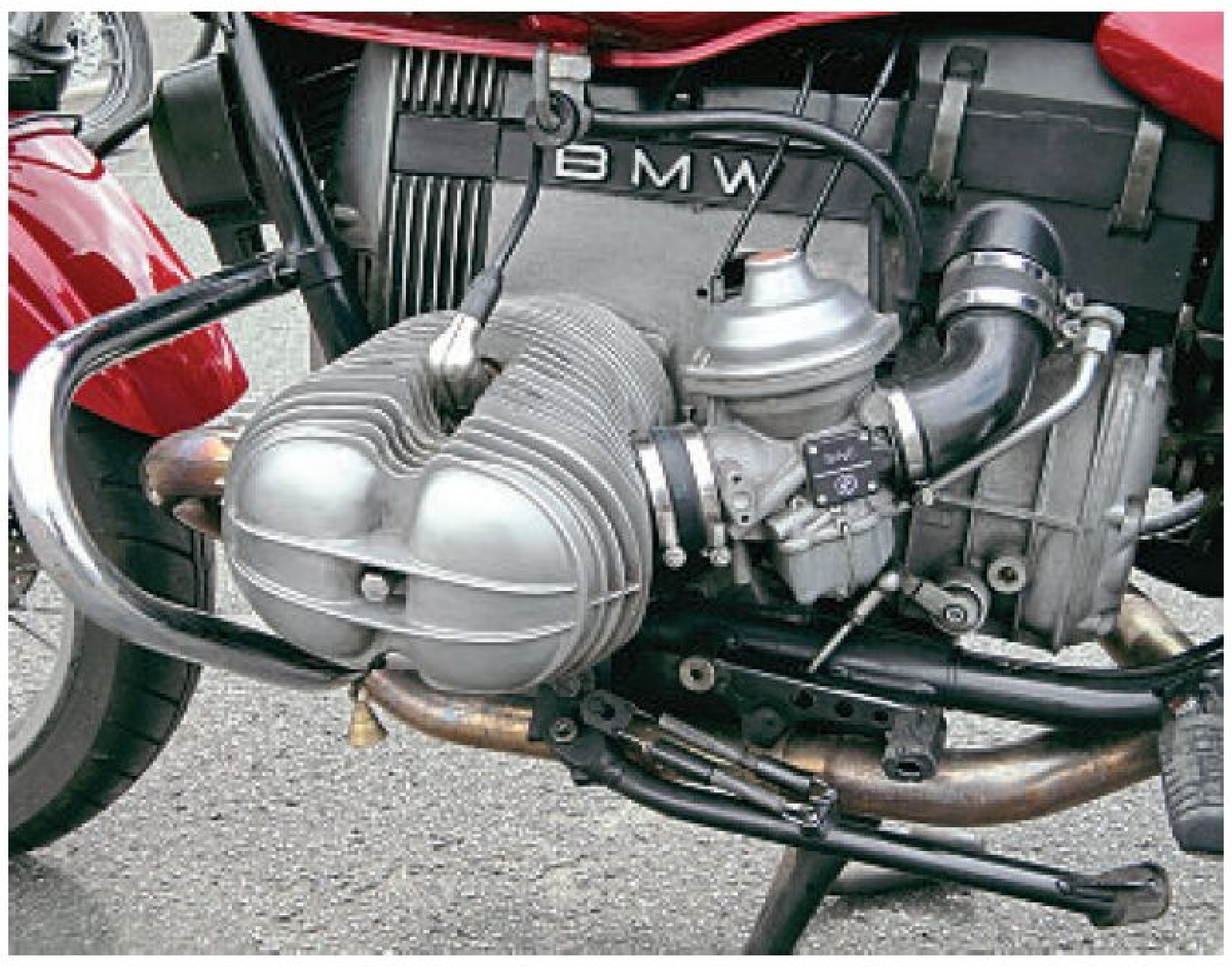
Inevitably, I have ridden a whole lot of BMWs, from mysteriously Earles-forked devices with folding-out kick-starts, via a whole raft of R80 and R100s in RT trim, to a very pleasant R100S. But I was always glad to return to the familiarity of my own machines. Please note at this point I am considering only what have become known as air-head BMWs, up to as late as 1996. Not the four-valve, oil-cooled later twins. They are very different indeed, and I like a couple of those a lot.

However, a nagging doubt had always lurked at the very back of my mind, surfacing whenever BMW aficionados deign to ➡

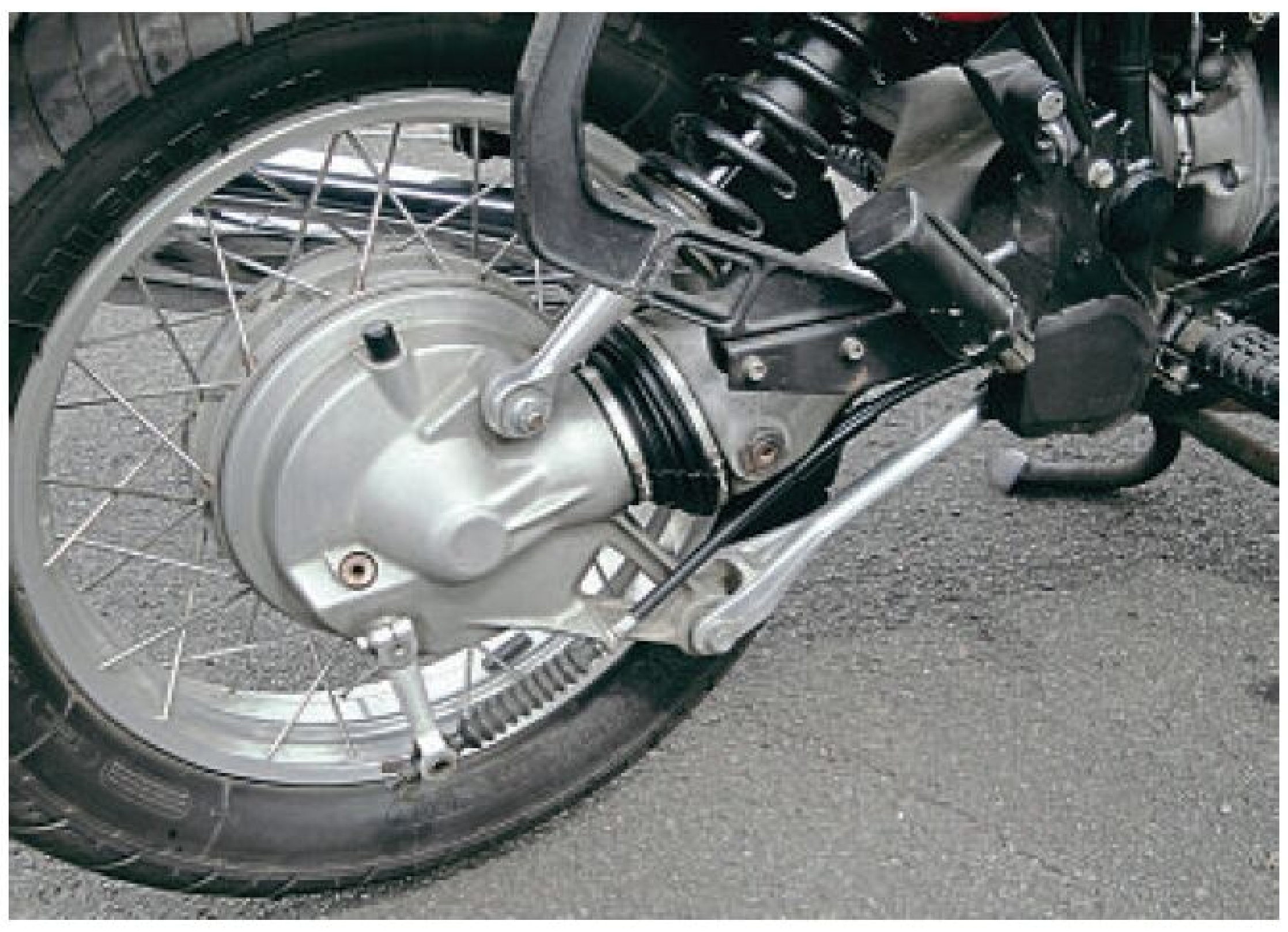
***"The opposite theory is that the very first version of a machine is closest to the manufacturer's original concept and is therefore the purest. A good example of that would be Sunbeam's S7. As well as theories, there is a personal appreciation thing."***



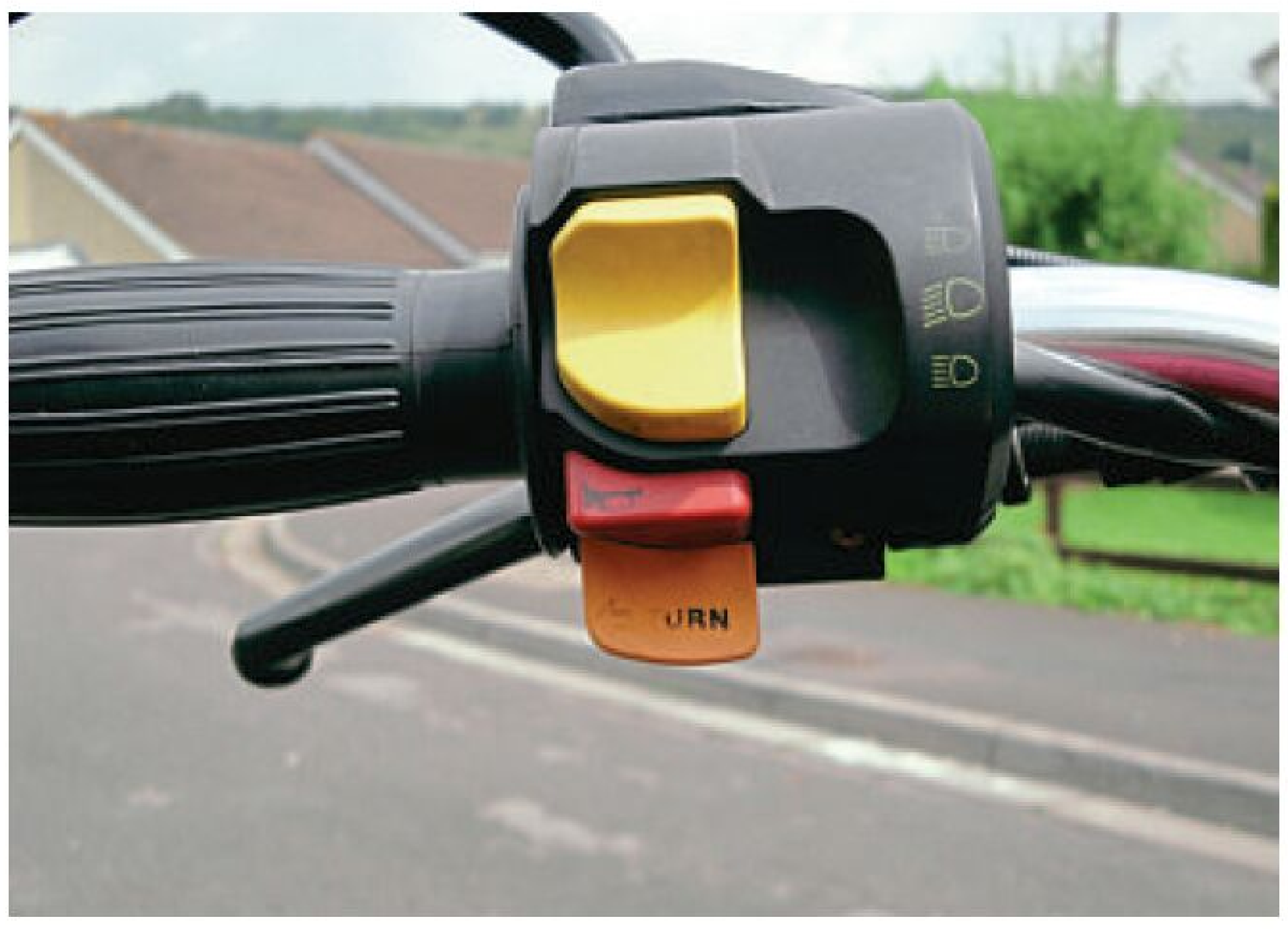




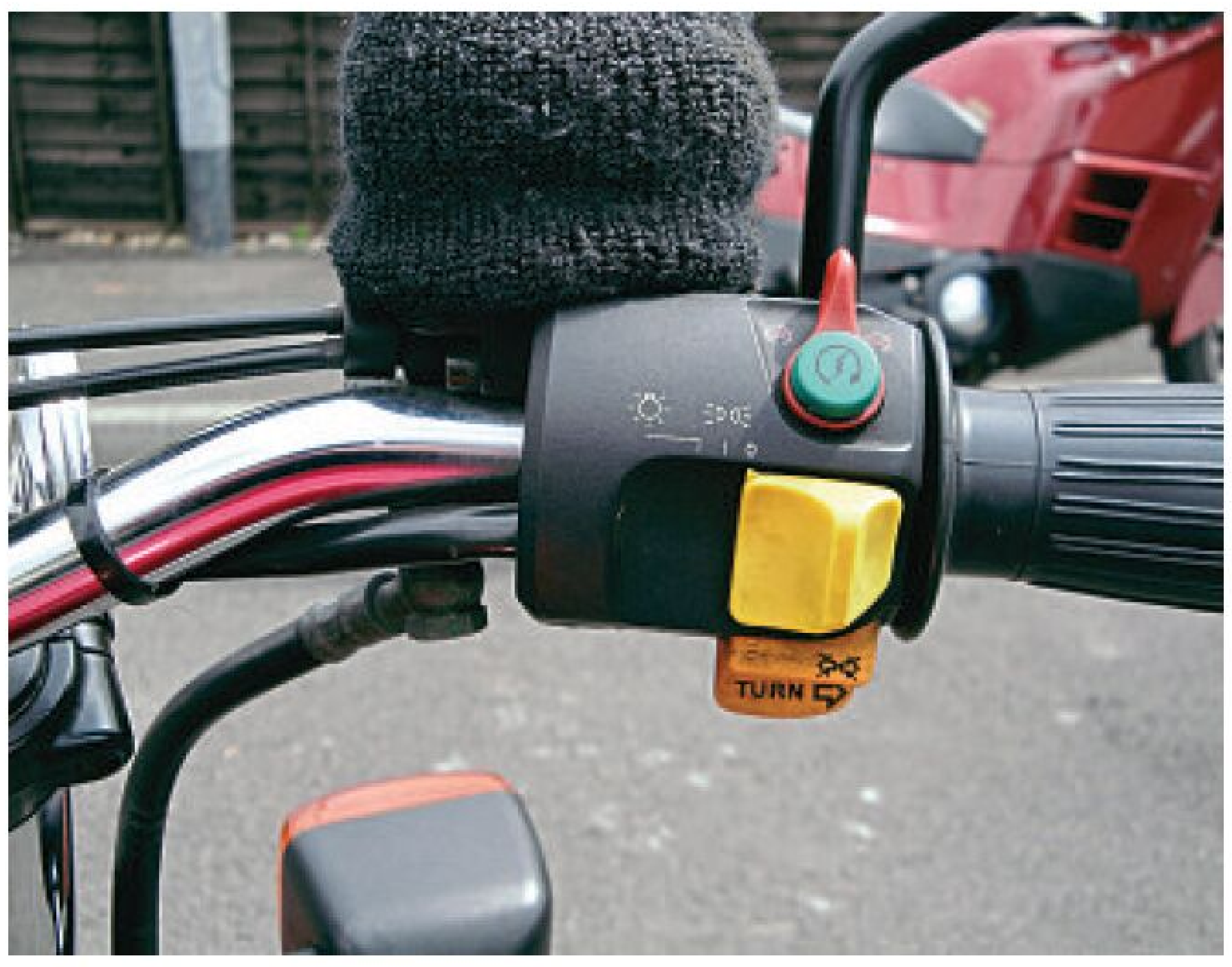
The left-hand side is much like the right-hand side, apart from the sidestand; observe it and understand that they can raise themselves when you least expect it



The drive shaft lives inside the hefty alloy casting. This is the useful 'Paralever' design, in which the single-sided swinging arm has an extra joint, to reduce rear end pitching, apparently



The left-hand switch block. Choke, dipswitch/flasher, horn and left-hand indicator



On the right we have the starter/kill switch, the main lights switch, the indicator cancelling switch and the right-hand indicator switch. Oh, also the front brake and the throttle. You do get used to it...

The oil cooler is standard and keeps the engine cool in the tightest traffic. The crash bars are an option and a good idea if you're unfamiliar with the sidestand

converse with me. Had I been unfair on that R100RS? Was there something wrong with me rather than with it? And given that we see many air-head Bimmers in classic land, surely it was about time I revisited the model and revised my opinion? Almost at once, the machine you see before you appeared less than 125 miles away, over in Oli Hulme territory. A 1995 R100R Mystic.

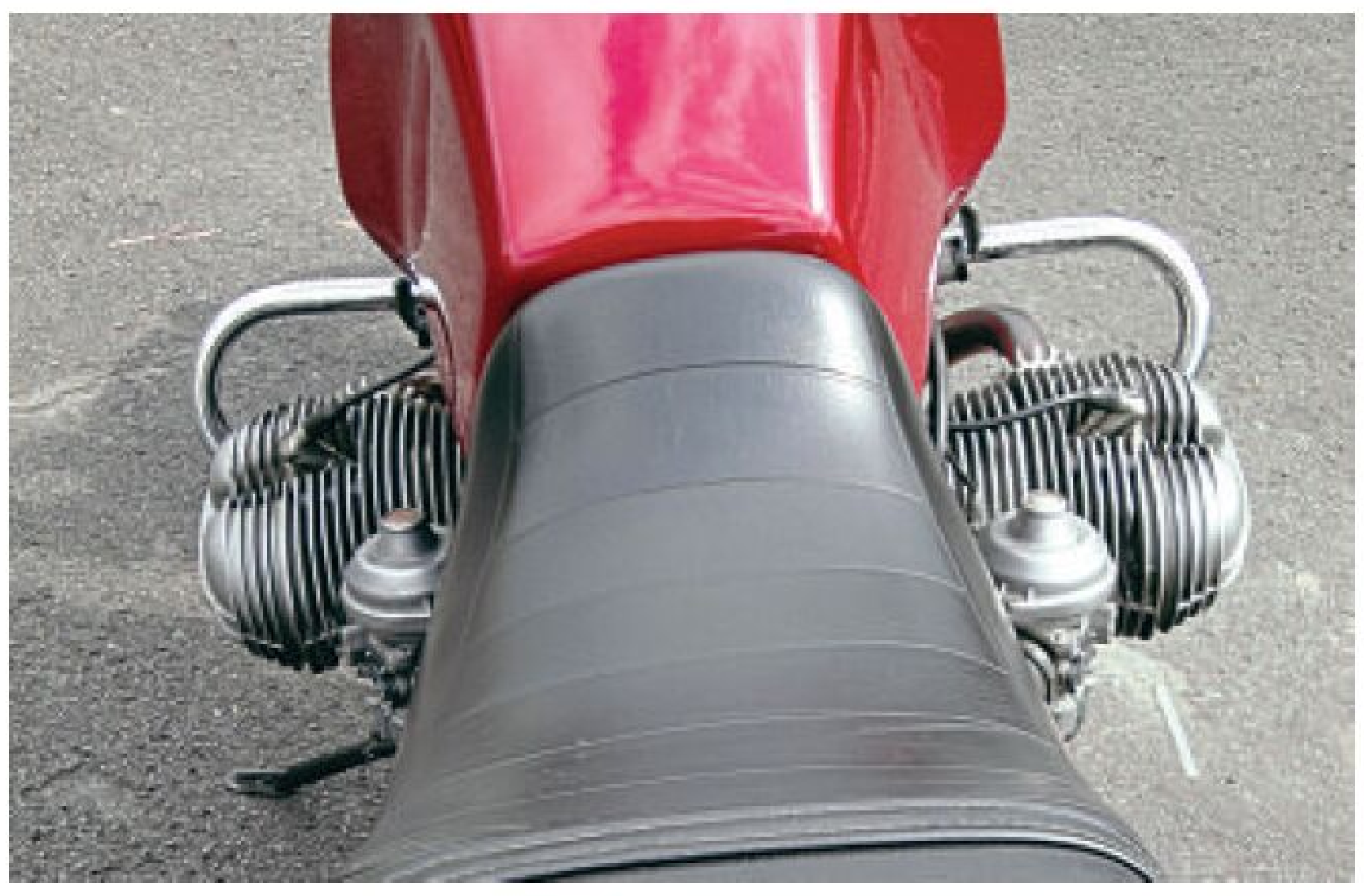
A what?

You may well ask…

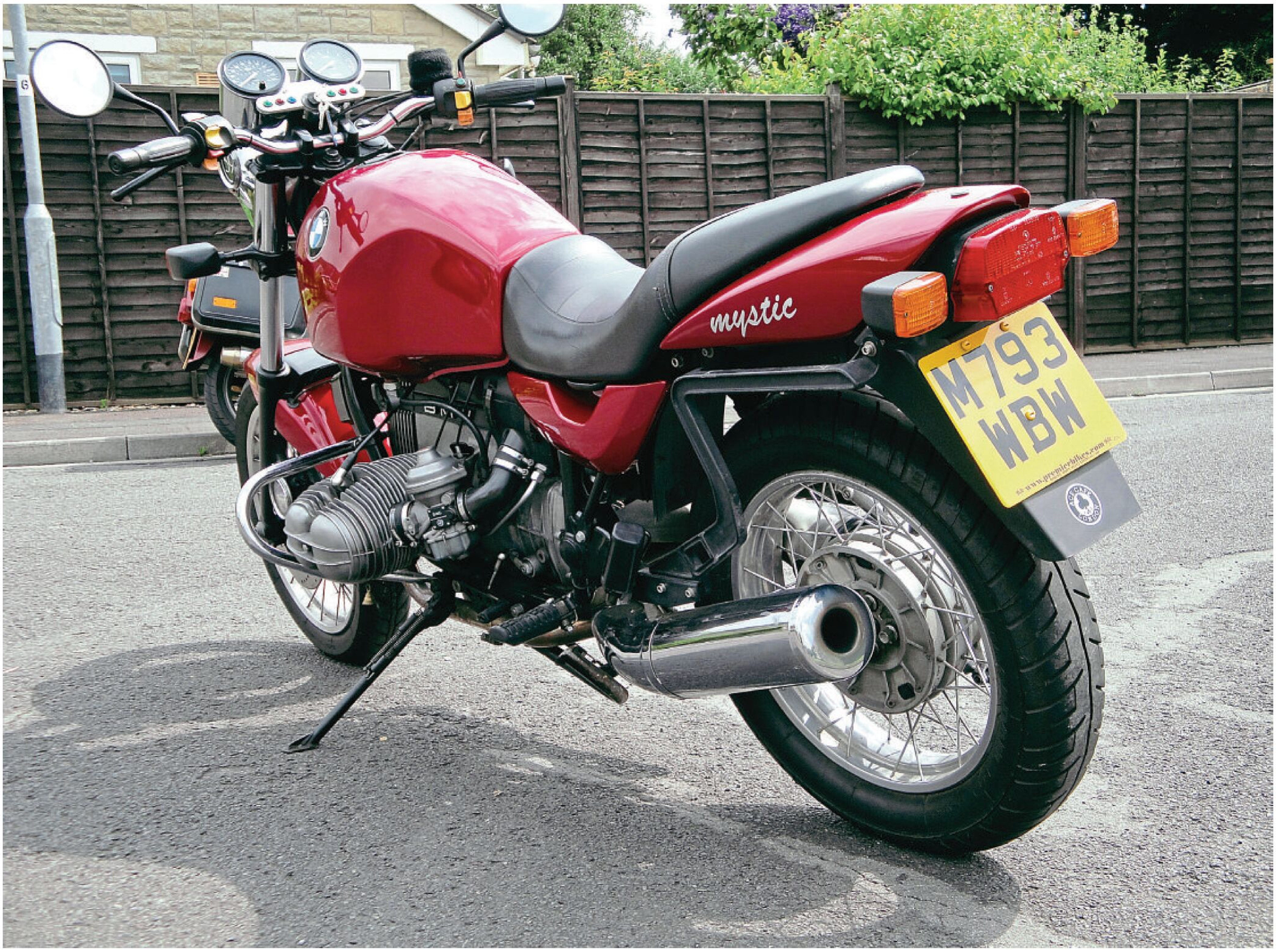
By the time its R100R Mystic was introduced, BMW had launched the four-valve oil-head range of twins which replaced and instantly outdated all the air-heads. And so, an unkinder man than I might have suggested that a better name for the R100R would have been Cynic, on the grounds that since BMW must surely have rejoiced in warehouses filled with spares for the outgoing range of models; why not assemble a load of these spares and sell them as completely new motorcycles? But that would have been a bleak way to look at things. The secret lies in the model designation: R is an opposed twin; 100 means its engine is notionally a litre; and R again suggests that the bike's a road bike. Aren't they all? Road bikes, I mean. No, they're not. Relatively late in the life of the air-coolers, BMW had introduced the G/S model, a mighty trail bike and, put simplistically, the R was based on that bike, which was no bad thing at all.

There was also some discussion at the time about the decision to build the Mystic using older-style, more rounded rocker boxes, as opposed to the later, more angular components fitted to the G/S. Was this a sign of BMW diving with Teutonic caution into the murky symbolist world of the 'retro' motorcycle? They were popular at the time; think of Kawasaki's Zephyrs and Honda's Big One, for example. However, diligent research revealed that BMW built several versions of the G/S and indeed GS,

brembo
MAGADI



The cylinders are staggered, as are the footrests, apparently. FW didn't notice while riding it

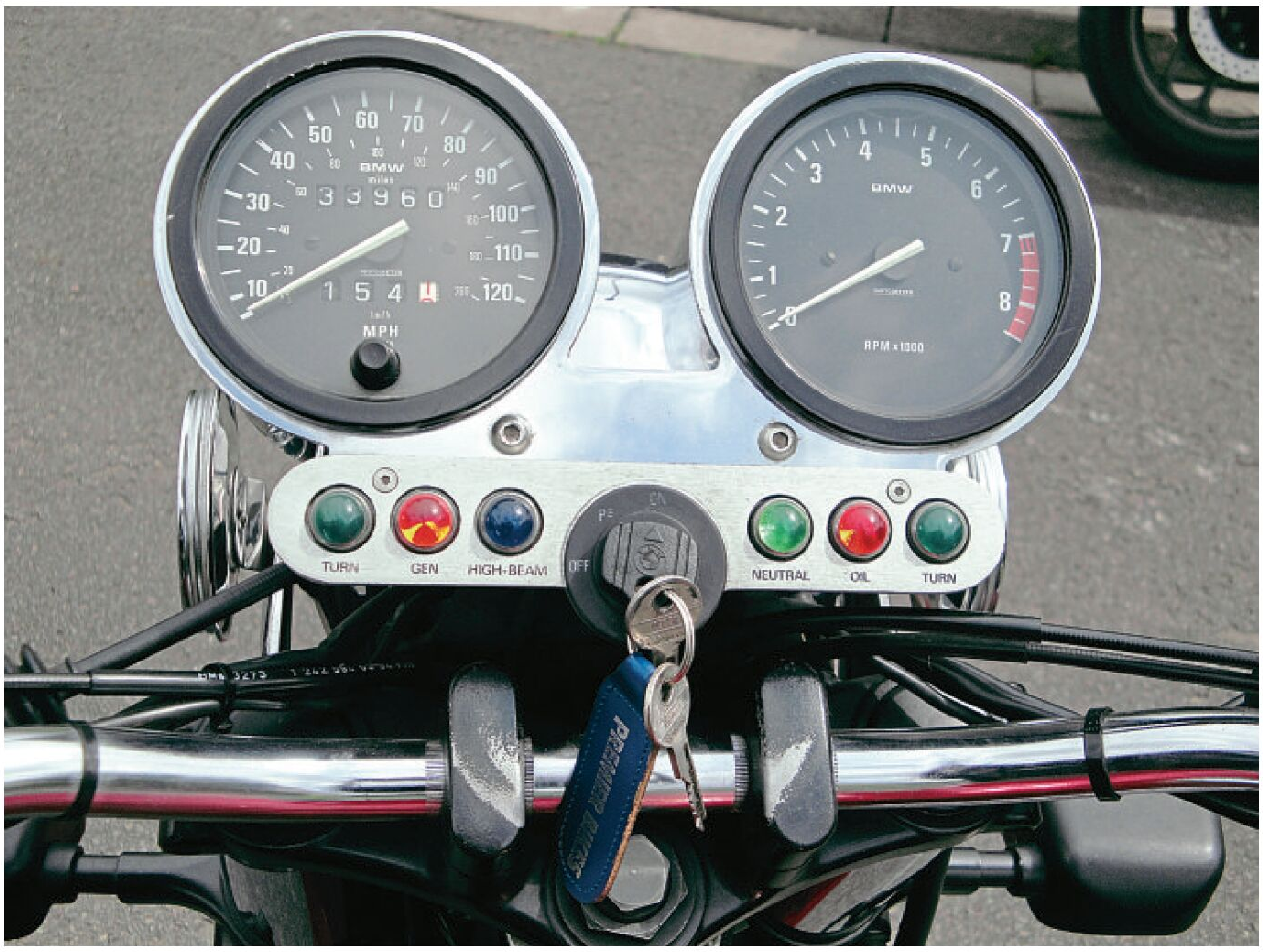


some with old-style and some with the newer-style rocker boxes. A tiny and no doubt trivial detail, but the detail is where the devil lies, and BMW is certainly no stranger to a little devilry of its own.

The Mystic's engine is essentially that of the GS, complete with 40mm Bing carbs rather than the 32mm Bings of the other later road twins. The result is 60 Bavarian bhp at 6500rpm, with 56lb.ft of torque at 3750rpm, which makes the bike decently rapid, if not exactly in the performance league of other litre bikes of its day. But you wouldn't have bought a Mystic back then to out-drag sportbikes, and you wouldn't

➡

BMW pioneered the use of tubeless tyres on spoked rims; take a look at the way the spokes are arranged so that air doesn't leak from the spoke holes, and so that spokes can be changed without removing the tyre. Handy in competition, they say



Nice clear clocks, and idiot lights which are visible in sunlight. Observe with joy BMW's supremely complicated ignition key

**Below:** After the ride, FW convinced himself not to buy the bike then and there and ride home on it...

do it today, either. You would have bought it because you liked it. And there is a lot to like.

BMW had used a double-loop cradle for its boxer twins for a long time. In style it's vaguely Norton featherbed, and it handles as well as that more famous set of tubes. The Mystic broke fresh ground in that it bounces about on suspension not from Herr BMW, but from Showa-san. You wouldn't know just to look at it, but Japanese those front forks are. And just to add a little extra non-Germanic componentry, the brakes are by Brembo and really serious stuff.

BMW did – and continue to do – things its own way. You know this as soon as you see one of its quirky boxers, and you are reminded of it every time you sit on one, even before you fire up the engine and perform the riding thing. The view down could only be a BMW. And the same applies to many things which normally attract no comment at all. Oh, an ignition key. A simple statement?

Not so. For quite a while BMW used ignition keys with a mysteriously folding plastic grip. When rattling around on your keyring it looks almost unremarkable. Then you fit it to its handlebar console-mounted switch and… you discover that as the metal prong slides into place, so the plastic grip folds flat, leaving a flush face facing you, complete with a little plastic BMW roundel and a little plastic arrow pointing forwards. How strange. And why is it so pleasing, somehow?

Turn the key and lights light up, as lights do, even in BMW-land. This leads you to the hand controls. Which are not as others. On top of the left-hand switch block is a circular choke lever. It works really well and tends to spring back under the power of its own enthusiasm, so hold it in place while you press the little green button mounted on top of the kill switch on top of the right-hand switch block. You will be immediately rewarded by a mighty metal meshing of things mighty and metal-y. Few engines sound as characteristic as this one; air-cooled Harley-Davidsons do, as do some Moto Guzzis, but really, be prepared for a great shake as all that metal moves from rest and then delight when the fires ignite and quite suddenly there's an unmistakably hefty engine whirring around beneath you. It does whir, and because the engine's two top ends stick out below the fuel tank, you hear everything that's happening.

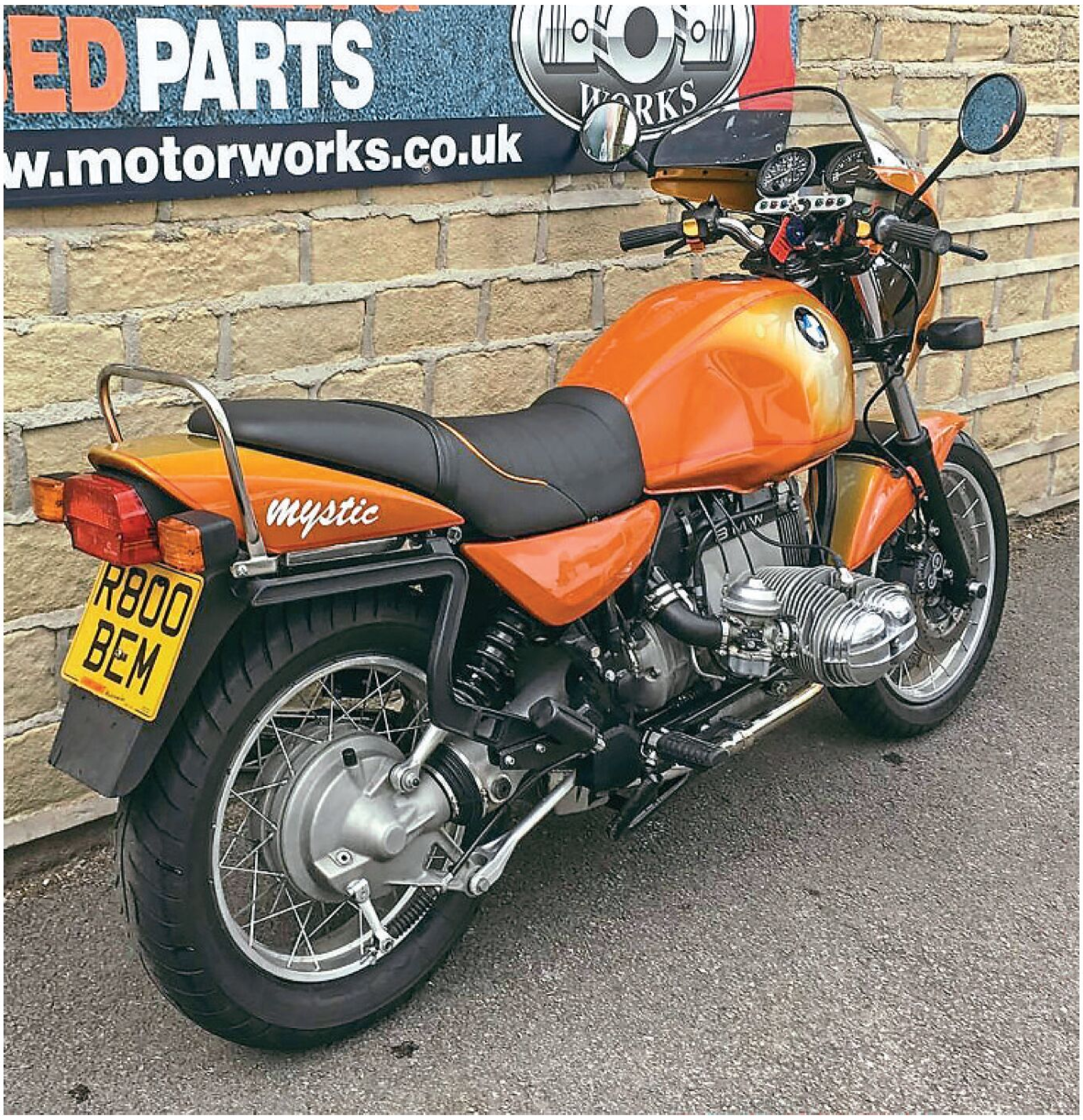
Tickover is immediate and steady, starting from hot, cold, or anywhere in between. BMW boxer twins sound like no other engine. They work like no other engine, too. Flick the throttle to check that this is so. It is so. I'd not previously ridden an air-head for maybe a decade and a half, so to be instantly familiar with it is a recognition of how unusual they are and is a tribute to BMW for recognising and understanding that.

The clutch is a cable clutch. It's light, smooth, and progressive; BMW boxer twins make interesting noises when the clutch grips the drive from the engine and transfers it to the rear wheel. Like a car, the BMW clutch is mounted on the engine's flywheel, which makes it feel different to more conventional clutches, which typically live on the gearbox mainshaft. Why it should be different, I know not. The BMW Mystic has five gears in its box, and they are all there for a purpose. Final drive from that gearbox is by a shaft, so I was prepared for the gentle uplift of the entire machine as the power feeds through.

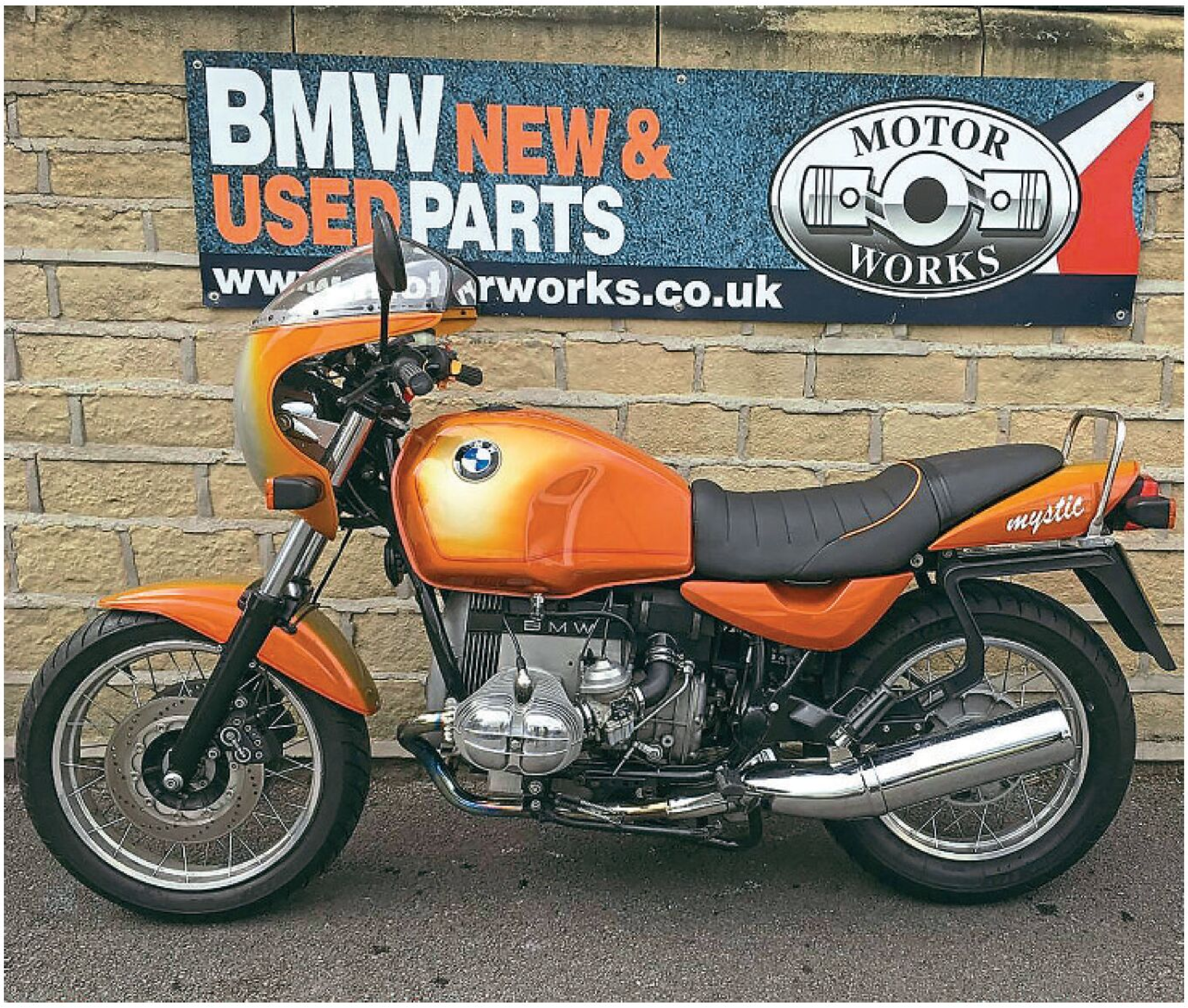
### BMW R100R MYSTIC STATS

**ENGINE:** 980cc air-cooled HO twin
**BORE/STROKE:** 94 x 70.6 mm
**COMPRESSION:** 8.5:1
**MAX POWER:** 60bhp at 6500rpm
**LUBRICATION:** Wet sump
**IGNITION:** Bosch electronic
**CARBURETION:** 2 x 40mm Bing carbs
**TRANSMISSION:** Shaft
**GEARBOX:** BMW five-speed
**FRAME:** Double loop tubular; bolt on rear subframe
**FRONT BRAKE:** 2x 285mm discs, four-piston callipers
**REAR BRAKE:** SLS drum
**FRONT SUSPENSION:** Showa telescopic fork
**REAR SUSPENSION:** Paralever single-sided swinging arm
**TYRES:** 110 / 80 V18 front; 140 / 80 V 17 rear
**GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6.25in
**SEAT HEIGHT:** 31.5in
**DRY WEIGHT:** 218kg

But there is no such uplift. This is because the rear end of the Mystic is not like that of earlier twin-shock BMWs. It was seen first on the R100GS in '87 and called the Paralever. Basically, it features an extra joint in the drive and its housing. The effect of this is to reduce 'pitching' at the back end, which apparently felt strange. The entire bike feels strange to anyone not used to it. I rode over to borrow this remarkable machine on a fairly strange rotary Norton; the BMW felt strange after that. Believe me. But there was indeed no discernible ➡



**“The Mystic is a thought-provoking and absorbing motorcycle. The thoughts most provoked as we rode along were these: how come I’ve not ridden one before, and how come I don’t own one?”**



pitching from the back. I am almost sure that this is a good thing.

The rear drive housing doubles as the swinging arm; a single-sided mechanism of massive substance and considerable unobtrusiveness. If that isn’t a word, then it should be. The single rear suspension unit lives on the drive (right) side, and the back end is balanced visually by a single silencer on the left. It is possibly the most accurately-named silencer available at the time. No muffler, this; it is stainless steel silences. The engine’s mechanicals are louder, and they’re very quiet.

You must remember the BMW approach to switches, too. The left-hand indicator switch is on the left handlebar. Of course it is. Logically enough, the right-hand switch is on the right. Both switches are slung underneath the switch block and are operable by the appropriate thumb. A logical approach. The other logical approach would have seen the flashers cancelled by the same thumb which turned them on, man. However, both indicators are, in fact, cancelled by a thumb-operated (you move that thumb upward) switch on the right. You can occasionally spot a novice BMW rider by the amusing way their horn sounds at an inappropriate moment. That will be hapless rider attempting to cancel his left-hand indicator using the amusing horn button. BMW fit very loud horns. They are a safety feature, I do believe.

Then you’re off. The engine is as smooth and as steady as so few big twins are – at least at low speeds. The Mystic is very closely based on the GS off-roader but fitted with good road rubber, and this is very obvious when paddling around at low speeds. Clutch home, engine just off tickover, lock-to-lock figure eights are easy. That’s my own benchmark for a well set-up engine and transmission package. Try it.

The gearchange is easy and positive, and the riding position is excellent. This really is a sort-of trail bike in street dressing. It is a delight in traffic. Calm. Steady. Very comfortable riding position; a great seat, and a great bum/foot relationship. The tyres, Michelins on the test victim, are fine; grippy and steady without a hint of wandering, certainly at any legal speed. And the brakes are sublime.

Most modern machines score over the more traditional of drum-braked classics mainly in the anchorage dept, at least as far as I’m concerned. The stoppers on the Mystic are Brembo four-pot callipers gripping a pair of 285mm discs at the front; the rear brake is a drum, should you wish to use it.

I cleared the tourist trap which is the small Somerset town of Cheddar, lost its traffic, and headed away into the roads. All the frustrations of riding my old boiling Norton behind its big fairing on a red-hot summer’s day vanished behind me. The big Bimmer whirred onward; I sat above the sparse traffic and gazed around. The roads have some beautiful bends around Cheddar and the Mystic glided through them. A minor delight of the shaft drive is that there’s no transmission shunt, so you can open and close the throttle while leaning pretty well into a bend with neither snatch nor catch to unsettle the rear tyre. The Mystic is a thought-provoking and absorbing motorcycle. The thoughts most provoked as we rode along were these: how come I’ve not ridden one before, and how come I don’t own one?

And of course the Mystic came equipped with fittings for BMW’s own design of hard luggage; time was that BMW intended all its bikes to be capable of touring.

But there’s much more than a gentle touring tool here. As I rode back to return the bike to its generous and trusting owner, I cracked the throttles a little more. And behaving exactly like the pair of 500cc singles it actually is, the engine thrives on wide-open throttles. It really does. And it flies! The engine delivers about 60bhp flat-out, and although I took it nowhere near the 7000rpm redline, it was hammering along with serious enthusiasm at about 5k. The handling when pressing on is as stable as when you’re pottering, and although the Showa front forks apparently feature less travel than their German predecessors, they deliver an excellent ride. They do dive a lot under the influence of those Brembos, but you soon get used to that.

While reading up on the model I discovered that as the cylinders are staggered, so the footrests are staggered too. I didn’t notice that at all. And I didn’t kick the carbs, either, although that had been one of my complaints about my own R100RS.

Complaints? Very, very few. Clutch and brake levers are quite a stretch from their handlebars, and the minor controls are strange at first. The centrestand is more of a man than I am, but the sidestand is easy to put down. The complaint is that it’s a suicide stand and flies up again as soon as the bike’s weight is taken from it. I really do not like that. It is, in fact, the only feature of the motorcycle I would change. Otherwise…

This is one of the very last versions of BMW’s air-head twins. It is strange. It is quirky. It is packed with character. So are Vincents and Velocettes and rotary Nortons. It is a machine well worth getting to know properly. It made a considerable impression on me, always welcome at this stage in my riding life, which has seen me riding at least two write-about bikes every month since 1988. The big old boxer has plenty of performance, is decently ancient, making it officially a ‘classic’, at least in the eyes of insurance companies, and offers unobtrusive performance, and a quiet inoffensive charm all its own. Hmm… CBG

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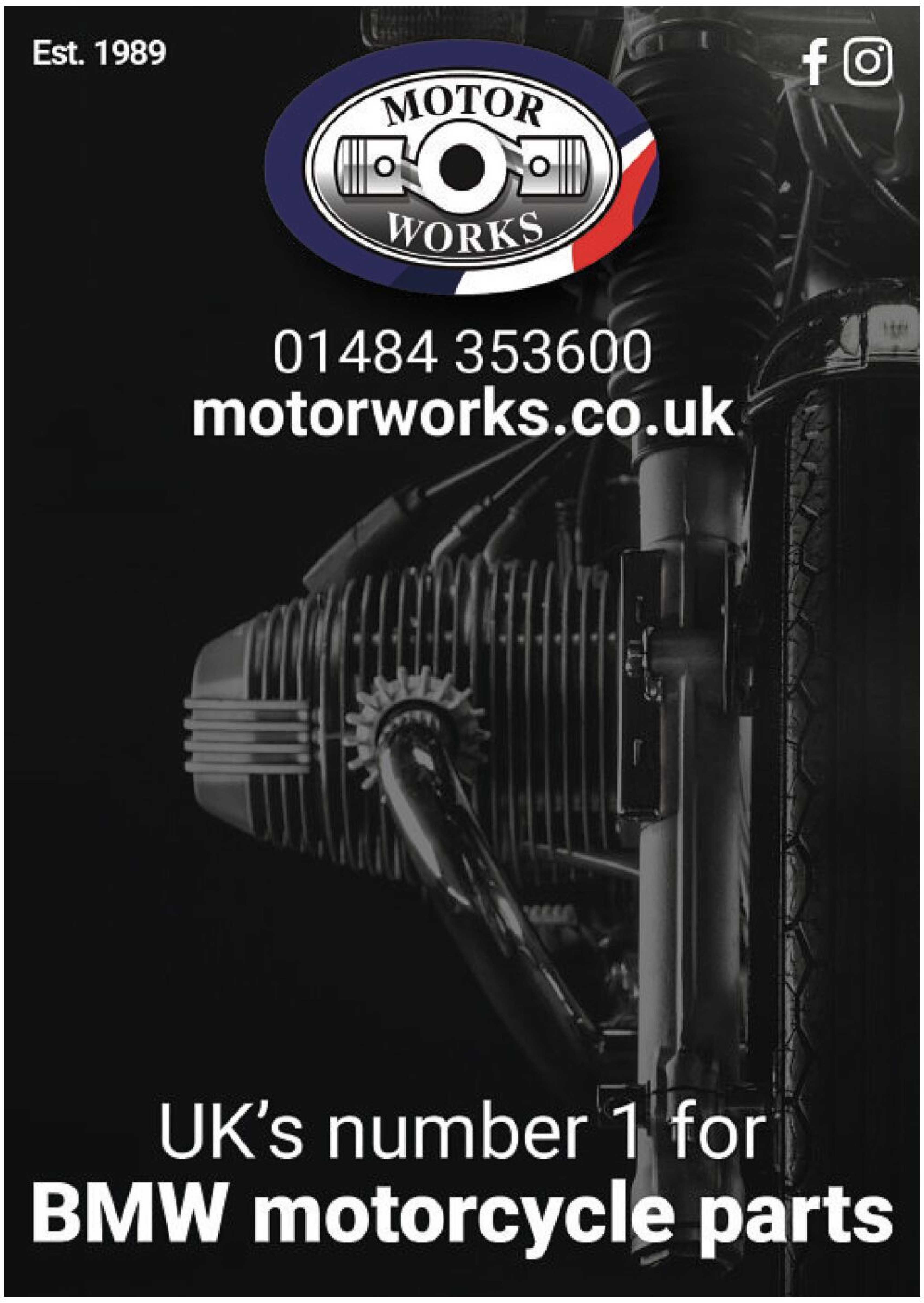

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# When will I be
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# Royal Enfield Interceptor 650

This motorcycle broke no boundaries, gave us nothing new, yet turned its manufacturer into a superpower throughout the world and its price point revolutionised the marketplace. It was the UK's best-selling large bike for some time. But is it actually worth owning?

**Words by** Oli Hulme, **with photography by** Matt Hull. With thanks to the supremely handsome and expert rider Ashley and his highly modded Interceptor for the shots and cover this month.

When will I be

# FAMOUS

**In 2015, the motorcycle industry's** direction had been the same for decades. The Japanese were at the top, the Chinese at the bottom, the Europeans were specialising, and the Americans ploughing their usual furrow. The Indians were just turning out their pushrod singles. And then Royal Enfield threw a 650cc spanner in the works with its low-priced, highly desirable retro twin. And the rest of the world has been running to keep up ever since.

In June that year, Royal Enfield's parent company Eicher Motors announced that it had acquired the legendary British motorcycle performance expert Harris Performance. A month later, the CEO of Eicher, Siddartha Lal, told the Indian press that he was moving to the UK: "We are in the process of developing engines for the international markets and lots of developmental work is happening in the UK. It is for that I have decided to move to the UK for one year." And industry insiders heard that Enfield had been recruiting designers from major motorcycle manufacturers, including Triumph.

Rumours that the first of these new Royal Enfields would be a 650 twin first emerged in 2016 and became more than rumours when spy shots of heavily disguised twins appeared. To be fair, the expectations were not great. Royal Enfield's range was considered okay but hardly earth-shattering. Compared to Japanese and European manufacturers, the Royal Enfield 350 and 500 OHV pushrod singles lacked finesse and finish quality, although the promised arrival of Lal's own concept, the 411cc Himalayan OHC single-cylinder adventure bike, was making some people sit up and take notice. Rumours of the new bike were all there was until the end of 2017, when the first Interceptor and Continental GT 650 twins suddenly appeared, at first at EICMA in Milan, and then at the NEC in Birmingham. It was a bit of a surprise for rivals, to say the least.

These new bikes were a pair of simple, straightforward parallel twins in all-new twin-shock frames designed by Harris – and they were worlds away from the old RE singles. At the same time, they harked back to the best of the old British Royal Enfield twins, the legendary Interceptor 2 of 1970, the last RE twin made in the UK.

> **"These new bikes were a pair of simple, straightforward parallel twins in all-new, twin-shock frames designed by Harris – and they were worlds away from the old RE singles."**

ROYAL
ENFIELD

INTERCEPTOR

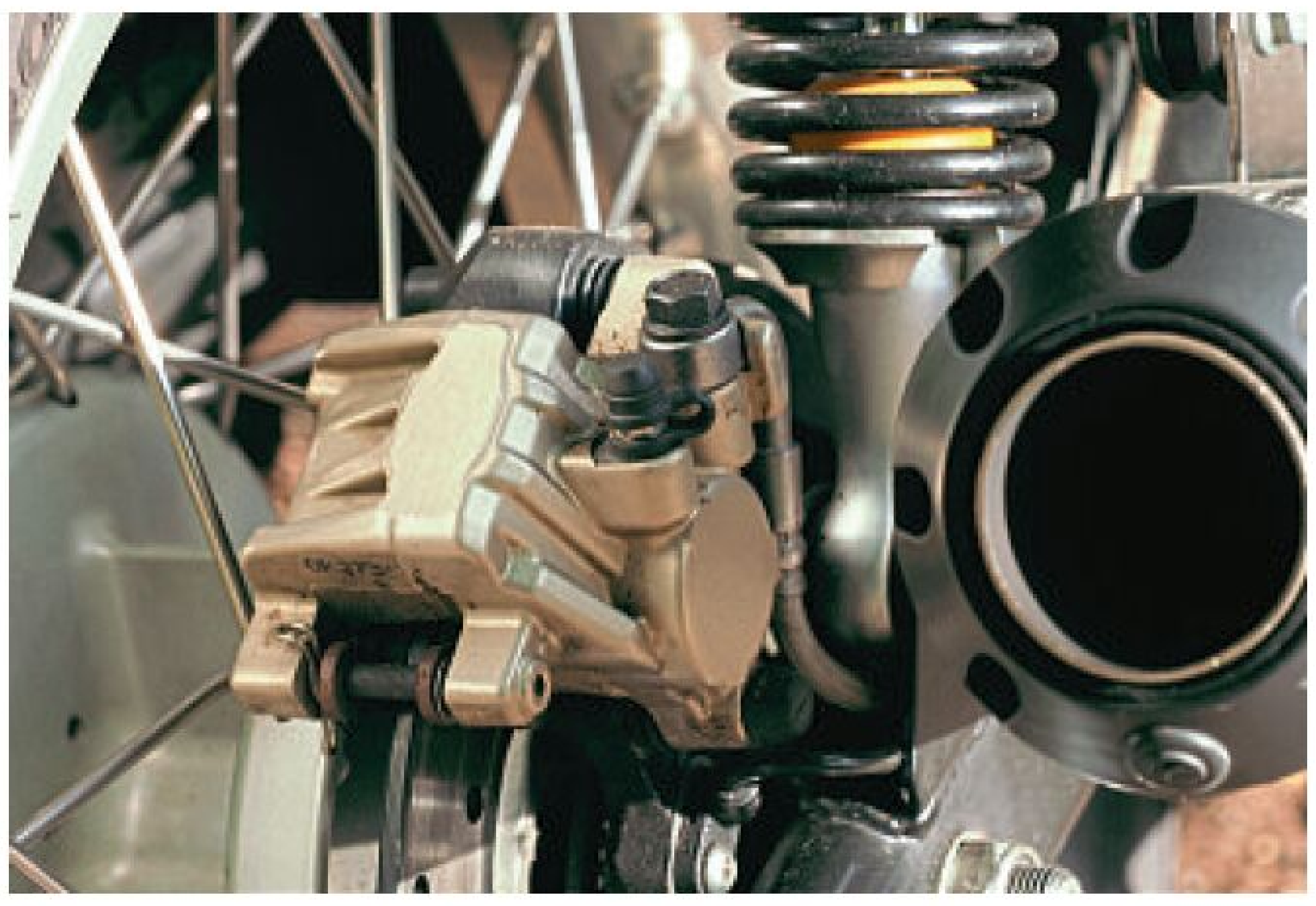
These new bikes looked like proper motorcycles. And there was much more blinking and surprise when the proposed prices started to leak out. You would be able to buy a brand-new Royal Enfield Interceptor 650 for less than £6000. Under six grand – more than £2000 cheaper than anything close to the model. There was a ready market for this new machine at that price. Buyers bored with the same old thing were suddenly offered a heritage product that left them a lot of money to make the bike their own. Used bike buyers could have a brand-new bike experience. There was some scepticism about build quality as until recently the old singles had been challenging to own, but potential buyers started to line up. The 650 would be available in April 2018, said Royal Enfield. It was built in a brand-new factory, would come with a substantial three-year parts and labour warranty, and a range of accessories.

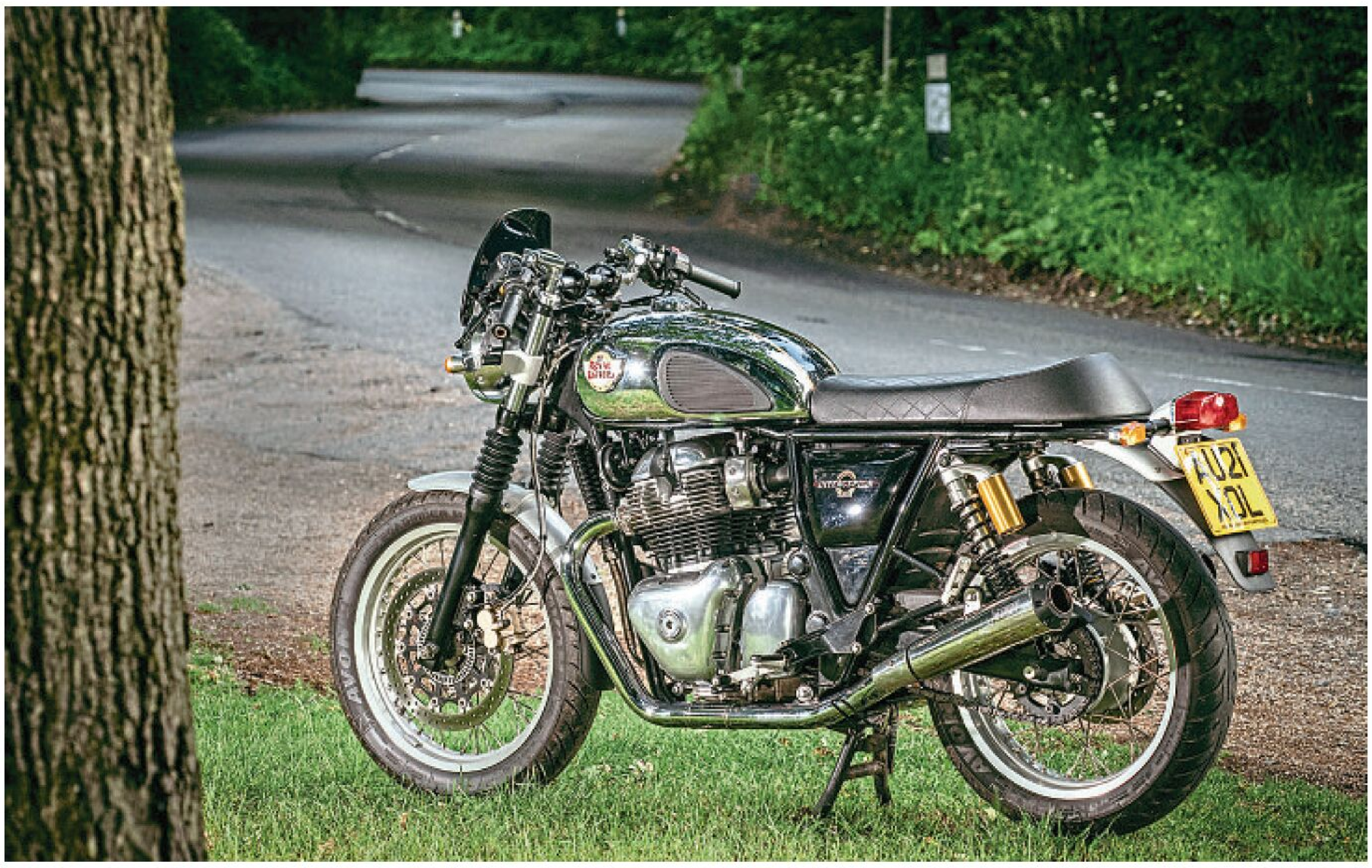
The air and oil-cooled 648cc engine was designed to look like the late 1960s Enfield twin engine, though the engine cases were reversed, with the left-hand engine case strongly reminiscent of the right-hand case on the old 750 OHV engine. The one-piece rocker cover disguised the presence of a camshaft. The engine had an oversquare bore and stroke of 78mm x 67.8mm and used four valves per cylinder, with the crankshaft a 270-degree design. A balancer shaft took care of primary vibrations. An all-new six-speed transmission used a slip-assist clutch. There was fuel injection, and the compression ratio was 9.5:1, producing 47bhp at 7100rpm. The engine was Euro 4-compliant and future-proofed to easily meet the stricter norms of Euro 5 when the need arose. The bikes went on sale in Europe first and were offered in markets around the world shortly afterwards.

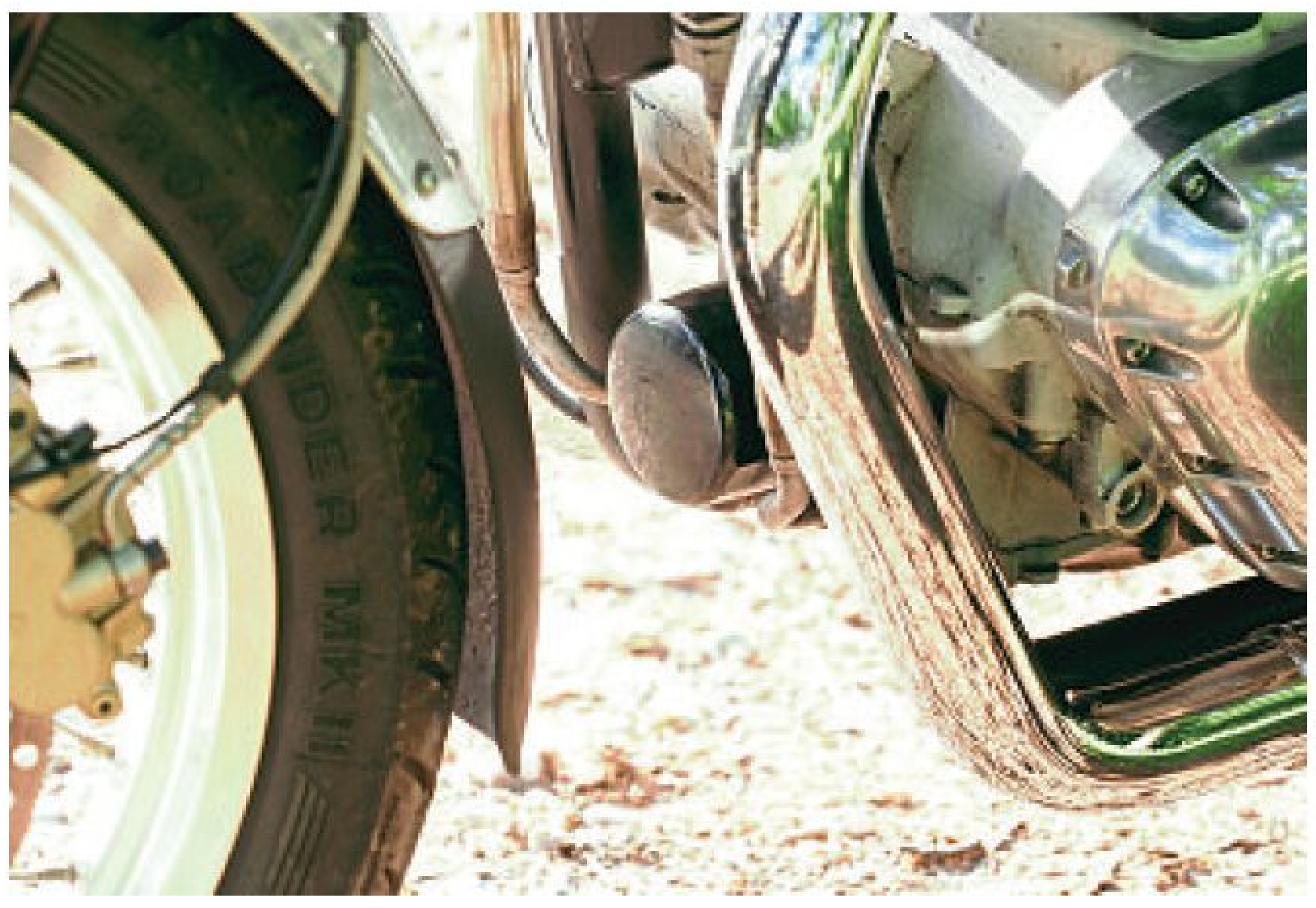
It wasn't a surprise when it didn't arrive in April, but a few months later the 650 was in the hands of magazine testers and started to appear in showrooms. When it did arrive, Royal Enfield helped redefine the way new bikes were sold. Getting a test ride on a mid-priced machine at that time from a dealership was a tricky proposition, but with a host of small, friendly, often old-fashioned dealerships catering to what was a core market – that of older and returning riders – the company made sure those dealers all had demonstrators for their customers to play with.

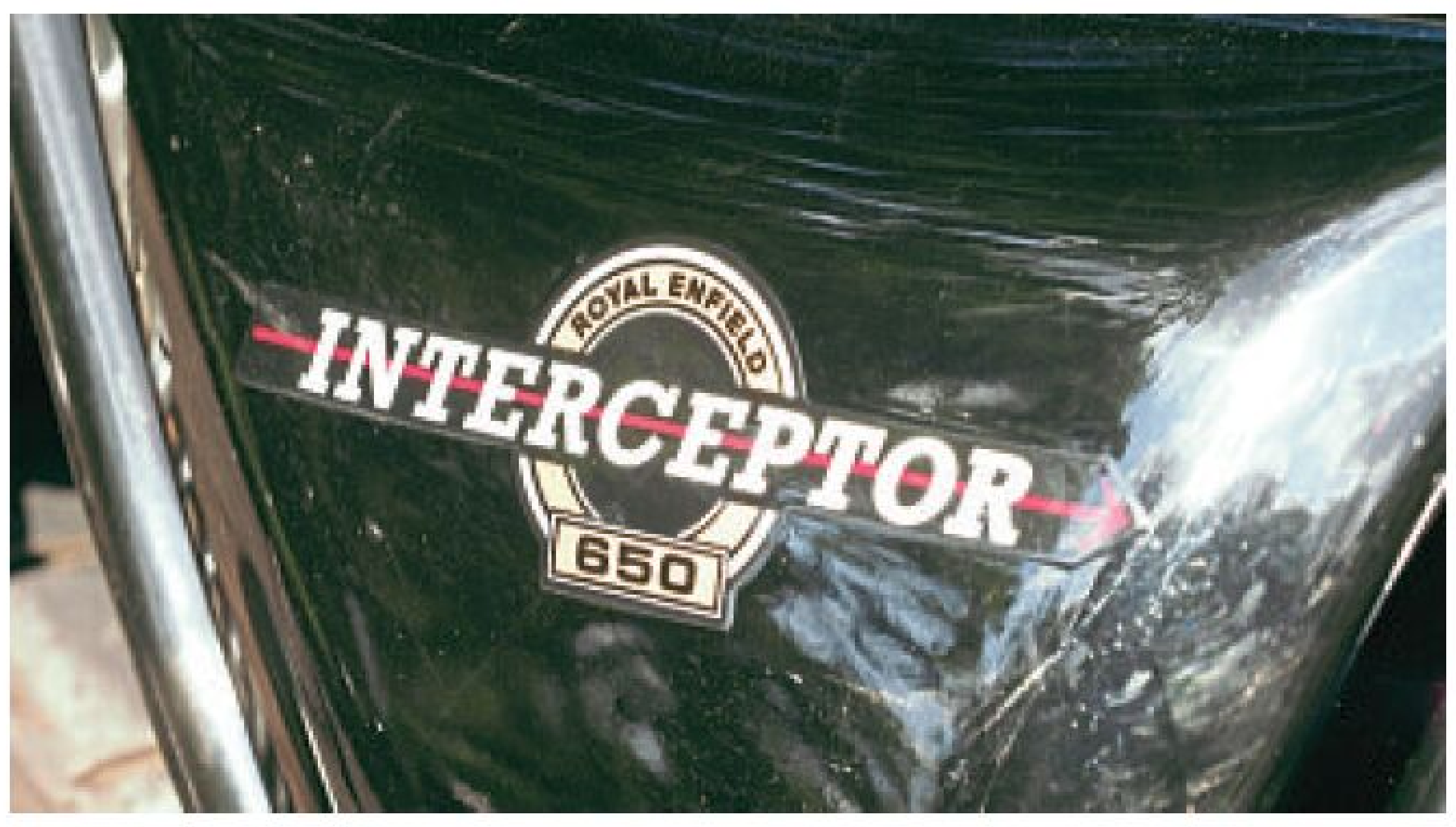
Most of those who experienced the two 650s soon realised that these were the bikes for them, with the Interceptor outselling the quirkier Continental GT café racer. They were not powerful enough to get you into trouble but fast enough to be fun, had very good gearboxes (possibly for the first time in Royal Enfield's history), and handled moderately well despite the slightly iffy CEAT tyres. You needed to be of average height or above to ride one comfortably, as they were pretty tall. The design brief was that the machine had to top 100mph and it be under 47bhp so you could ride it on an A2 licence. It was under-stressed, smooth, and didn't rattle.

There was some scepticism about the machine's longevity, but it soon became apparent that the bike didn't rot. It was nearly viceless.









### First ride on the new Interceptor

I borrowed an Interceptor from GV Bikes in Taunton on a chilly day in January 2019 and found it excellent, even on slippery winter roads.

I went for the Interceptor rather than the GT as I considered it the better-looking of the twin and a café racer crouch wasn't for me. I handed over my driving licence, was given the key and a brief guide to the simple controls and then left to it. I liked the lines as there was none of the mass of tubes and pipes that the Japanese burdened their 'retros' with. It is interesting that since those days, rivals have tidied up their own acts.

The switchgear was simple and straightforward. The indicator switch was flip on/push off, just like those on my old Yamaha XS650 twin. There was a kill switch, a starter button, a horn and a

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dipswitch, and that was it. Two clocks were neat and unencumbered by fancy displays, with a mere handful of warning lights in the speedo and a digital fuel gauge. No TFT displays or flashing gewgaws. It felt like an updated bike from the late 1970s, not dissimilar to my old Yamaha, apart from the fact that the power delivery was smoother and handling was vastly better.

The sit-up-and-beg riding position meant I could keep my feet flat on the ground at a standstill. The seat sitting, as it did, on the flat rear subframe did feel thin. Finish looked good, with nice thick paint on the tank and frame. There were braided hoses, alloy rims, smart-looking brakes and proper mudguards, though the finish on the hubs didn't look great.

A restrained yet rorty noise came from the two big silencers. It was easy to get to grips with. The wide semi trails-type 'bars made it easy to chuck about and the riding position was perfect for reading the road a long way in front. It was all my best youthful riding experiences rolled into one modern package. With nothing more than a rustle from the 270-degree crank twin, there was just a very faint vibration to remind me it was still running. The clutch was light, and the gear shift superb, as good as anything from Japan. Once out of town and onto a muddy and potholed country B road, the Interceptor was in its element, sure-footed and forgiving. The suspension was basic at the front, while nothing to write home about at the back, but you could chuck it into a bend and come out grinning the other end, keen to do it again, only a few miles an hour faster next time. The front brake, although just a single disc, would easily pull things to a halt. Fuelling was a little fluffy at low revs but otherwise faultless. It had one too many gears for me, being someone who had grown up on four and five-speed bikes, and the most fun was to be had flipping between third, fourth and fifth. How the riding position would stand up to motorway riding was less clear, but then, this wasn't a motorcycle for motorway riding. Instead, it felt like a great town bike and relaxed back road scratcher, a smashing middleweight motorcycle that had me grinning from ear to ear. The one I really fancied was the red and black one with the black wheel rims, but they didn't have a delivery date for it.

My inner cynic kicked in on the way home. I've been burned before by being an early adopter and decided that it might be a good idea to wait a few months to see if there were any teething problems. In the meantime, in a fit of madness I bought a Husqvarna Svartpilen 401 instead, which was great fun but the complete opposite of the Enfield twin – apart from the hardness of the seat. But everywhere I went, I saw Interceptors. They had become the classic motorcyclist's go-to turn-key bike. Fun to ride and always ready to go. You could ride them, wash them, then ride them some more.

## Three years on

It was 2022 when I got another chance to try out the two twins together, on a tour of Cornwall with a bunch of the latest Royal Enfield singles. The first bike I rode was the Continental GT, which I found, as expected, to be a little awkward, especially on narrow country roads. The GT excelled at the big sweeping A roads, but it wasn't very forgiving. I swapped it for the Interceptor, which was much better but still a little unwieldy in the nadgery. The biggest issue, though, was that after 60 miles in the saddle, my rear end was really starting to feel the pain of enduring the thin standard saddle. In the end, I found the 350 singles far more usable, until the final day

### SPECIFICATION

**Royal Enfield Interceptor 650 2019 model**

**ENGINE:** 648cc SOHC four-valve per cylinder parallel-twin air-oil cooled **BORE/STROKE:** 78x67mm **FUELLING:** Twin-throttle body EFI **POWER:** 47bhp @7250rpm **TRANSMISSION:** Six-speed gearbox **IGNITION:** Electronic **FRONT WHEEL:** 100/90-18 tyre spoked **REAR WHEEL:** 130/70-18 tyre spoked **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Hydraulic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Twin shock **FRONT BRAKE:** 320mm single disc **REAR BRAKE:** 240mm single disc **LENGTH:** 83.5 in (2122mm) **SEAT HEIGHT:** 32in **KERB WEIGHT:** 213kg **FUEL TANK:** 13.7 litres **TOP SPEED:** 100mph

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when torrential rain and high wind arrived. I swapped back to the GT and found the riding position, hunched over the 'bars, weight off the saddle riding position, to be much superior to the Interceptor. I also decided that using an Interceptor as a daily rider would be more than sensible, but that spending some of the money saved on comfort aids would be essential.

### Changing the rules, Royal Enfield style

By now, the Interceptor and Continental GT were a massive part of classic motorcycling culture. RE had played a blinder, selling clothes, accessories and upgrades, and multiple paint schemes on the 650s. There was no need for your twin to look like everybody else's. And with the success of the twin, it was time to expand the range. There were special paint schemes and then a new frame to go with the cruiser-style Super Meteor, a street-tough model, the Shotgun and a shiny twin in the true heritage mould, the 650 Classic that followed the lines of the massively popular 350 single.

Recently, RE launched the bike that owners had already been creating for themselves in the form of the 650 Bear, an all-out scrambler/desert sled-type machine clearly inspired by all the modified Interceptors that owners had been building. The Continental GT hasn't quite captured the imagination in the same way as the Interceptor but still has a following. And despite seven years passing, the price of an Interceptor has barely moved. Factory price of a basic Interceptor model is £6599 on the road, while the top-of-the-range Bear 650 is £6749. It's interesting to note that previously soaring prices from rival motorcycle manufacturers for basic middleweights have stalled. It could be they have found they can't sell a bike for much more than Royal Enfield, if they want to sell anything at all. And if you shop around, you can search out a pre-registered 2024 model RE 650 Interceptor new from the showroom for £4799 – or for £4399 if you want a basic Continental GT. Now, that is bargain motorcycling.

Rumours abound that a high-performance 750 version is on the way in 2026 and that the first model will be a tuned, fully-faired, twin-disc, classically-styled Continental GT-R, which should give other manufacturers even more food for thought.

### Modding your 650 – the view from the shop counter

Hitchcock's of Solihull has been a Royal Enfield specialist for decades, so who better to ask about the 650 twins and what you can do with them. It turned out to be a very illuminating chat.

Dan Hitchcock shared his experience of providing parts for the twins, and some of what he said caught us by surprise. Many manufacturers provide aftermarket bits for their model owners, but no one does it Royal Enfield's way.

Dan said: "Enfield factory add-ons are cheaper than any aftermarket supplier can manage. They are tremendous value.

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> ***"Enfield factory add-ons are cheaper than any aftermarket supplier can manage. They are tremendous value. Take seats, for example. There are many styles – we keep about 1000 in stock and turn over a lot."***

Take seats, for example. There are many styles – we keep about 1000 in stock and turn over a lot. They start at £83.33 and are really good quality. We have looked at how much it would cost to have seats made, and the factory ones are half the price. We can't work out how they do it. Aftermarket cables can have questionable quality, but the factory cables come out really well."

### What do people buy to improve their bikes?

"Most like to change the 'bars and the seats, and there are 15 different seat options. Some go for a particular look and others for comfort and, of course, you can swap them about depending on what you are using the bike for. Bar risers are popular to improve the riding position, and so are adjustable brake and clutch levers. Changing the shock absorbers is common, with YSS or slightly cheaper Hagons both being very popular." Dan said exhausts come next, with Enfield Precision slip-on silencers the cheapest as they are not homologated but can be fitted with no need to remap the ECU. Next are Zard silencers, which are Euro 4 and Euro 5-compatible.

"Then there are full systems, high-level, 2-2 and 2-1. The 2-1 set-up is very popular. People buy crash bars and radiator guards, and we have a good range of sump guards."

### What advice do you give customers on tuning?

"The 650 is so easy to work on. The first step is to fit DNA filters, and we have a very popular set-up made in Greece with a new filter and filter plate that gives a fairly good bump up in the torque the engine produces.

"We suggest fitting a free-flow exhaust which can use the stock ECU. Some owners like to look at upgrading the camshaft and fitting a fuel controller like a power commander. There are two kinds of big bore kit, where you can get your old barrels modified by boring out the liner and fit new throttle bodies, but buying the barrels off the shelf is more popular."

The engines can be taken out to 750cc or 865cc with an S&S kit, which will take the power from about 45bhp at the tyre to 65bhp.

"The difference in torque at the bottom end is huge with the 865cc kit, but we find that just dropping a new cam in and keeping the engine as a 650 is a more cost-effective way of getting more power. A Fuel-X unit is a great help. This simply plugs inline into the O2 sensors and solves the issue of jerky power supply at low speeds affecting the ride. It fools the injector into thinking that the mixture is weak and enriches it, which smooths it out. People cannot believe the difference it makes. It's plug-and-play too, unlike a Power Commander where you need to attach the bike into a PC and remap it.

"We sell parts to convert the GT into the Interceptor by changing the top yoke and bars – I think lots of people buy a GT because of the way they look, but then find they aren't quite as flexible as they once were and want a more comfortable riding position. Alloy wheel conversions are popular too.

"And, after requests from customers, we have put together a kit to give your 650 a more 1960s look. There are braced front chromed mudguards, chromed mudguards for the rear, an old-style numberplate bracket and a 1960s-style seat too."

INTERCEPTOR

### All the mods

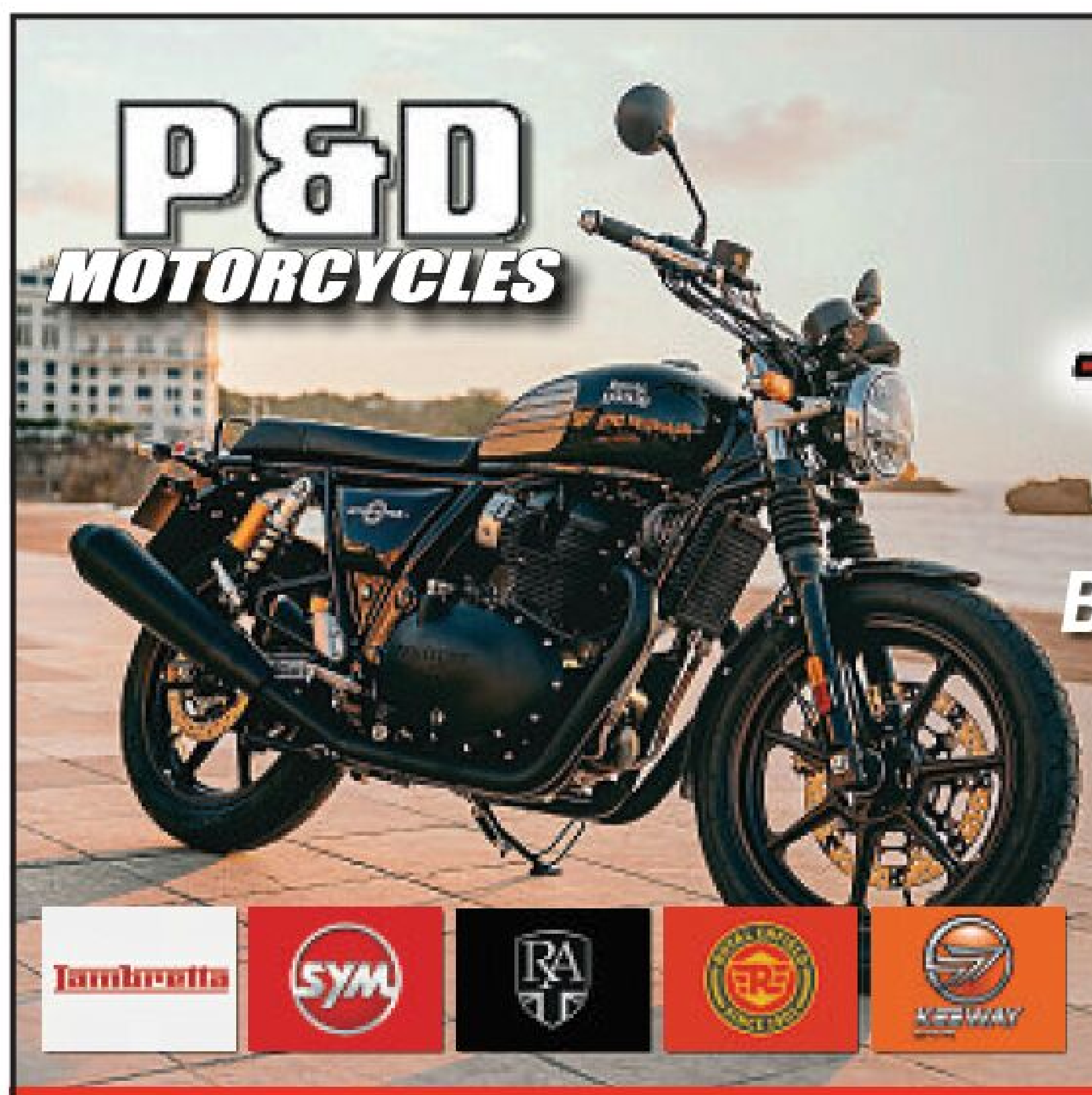
James bought his low-mileage Interceptor 650 about three years ago. It came in a Glitter and Dust paint scheme. With about 2000 miles on the clock and one previous owner, it came in at a good bit less than £4000, and once it was in his hands, he got to work making it all his. First things to go were the big heavy original silencers in favour of a smart stainless-steel TEC 2:1 set-up which not only improved performance and the sound the bike made, but it also chopped a whopping 20kg off the weight. The front sprocket has been reduced by one tooth. The original seat was changed for an official RE aftermarket option known as the Signature Bench Seat, which lowered the ride height a little. The heavy and unforgiving standard shock absorbers were swapped out for a sleeker set of Hagons, which greatly improved the ride.

A small flyscreen sits up the top of the forks and the clocks, and adjustable levers sort things out in the control department. Mild performance mods included fitting a DNA airbox, which made the engine breathe more easily, and fitting a 'booster plug' which interrupts the signal from the air temp sensor and fools the ECU into adding more fuel during acceleration.

The brake pads were swapped out for sintered pads, and the plastic rear hugger was removed, though the front hugger stayed, as it is useful for keeping muck off the front of the bike and is pretty inobtrusive. The rear light is a Motone unit, and there are bullet LED indicators to tidy up the lines.

James has covered 6600 miles on his Interceptor and loves it.

"I had a T120 Bonneville, the modern one, but just didn't get on with it. This, though, is agile, nimble and lightweight. I use my Himalayan 90% of the time and occasionally wonder if I should sell the Interceptor, but in the end, I can never think of a reason why I should. I've had no issues mechanically at all and it's huge fun to ride. I just don't know how they do it for the money." CBG



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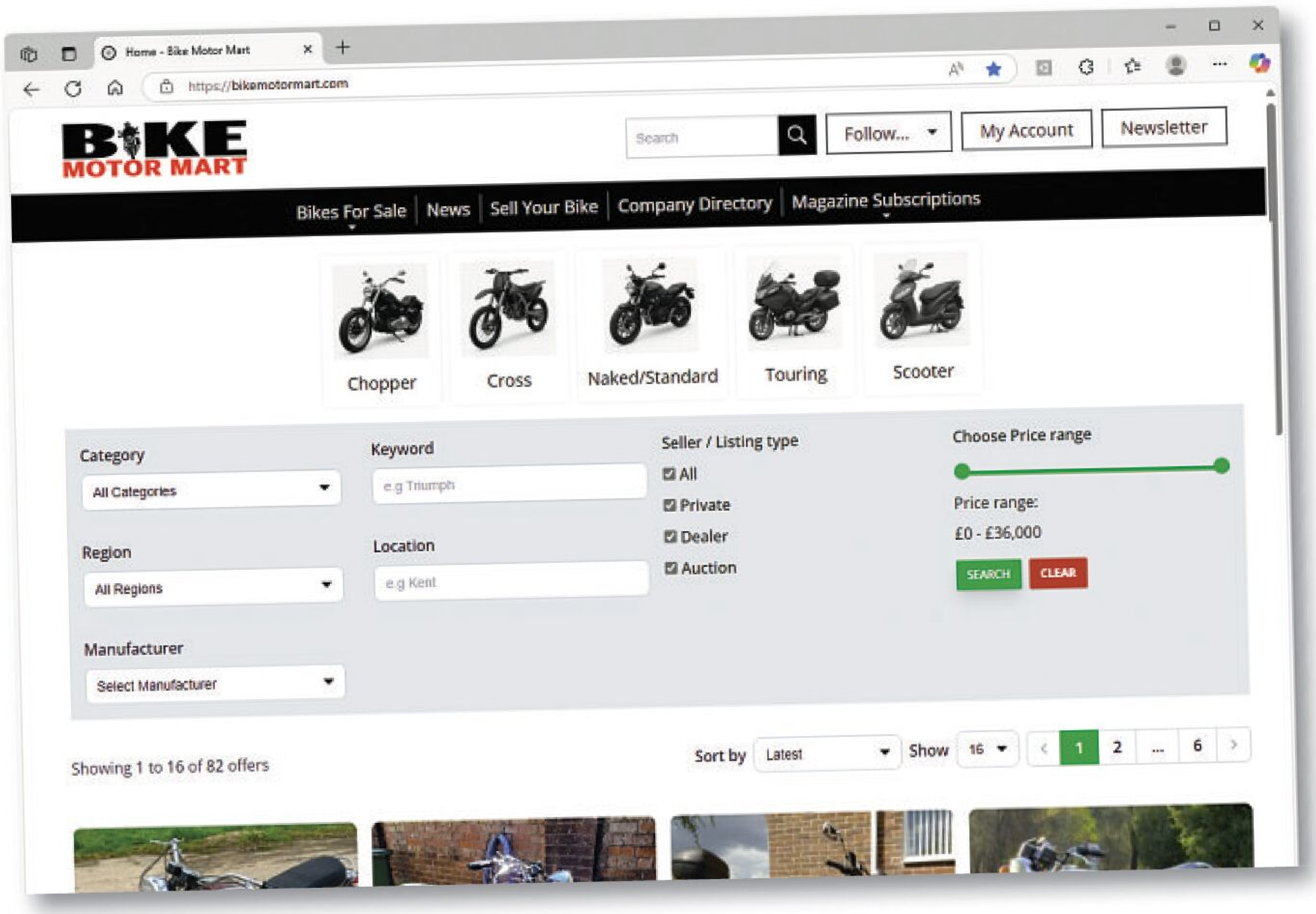

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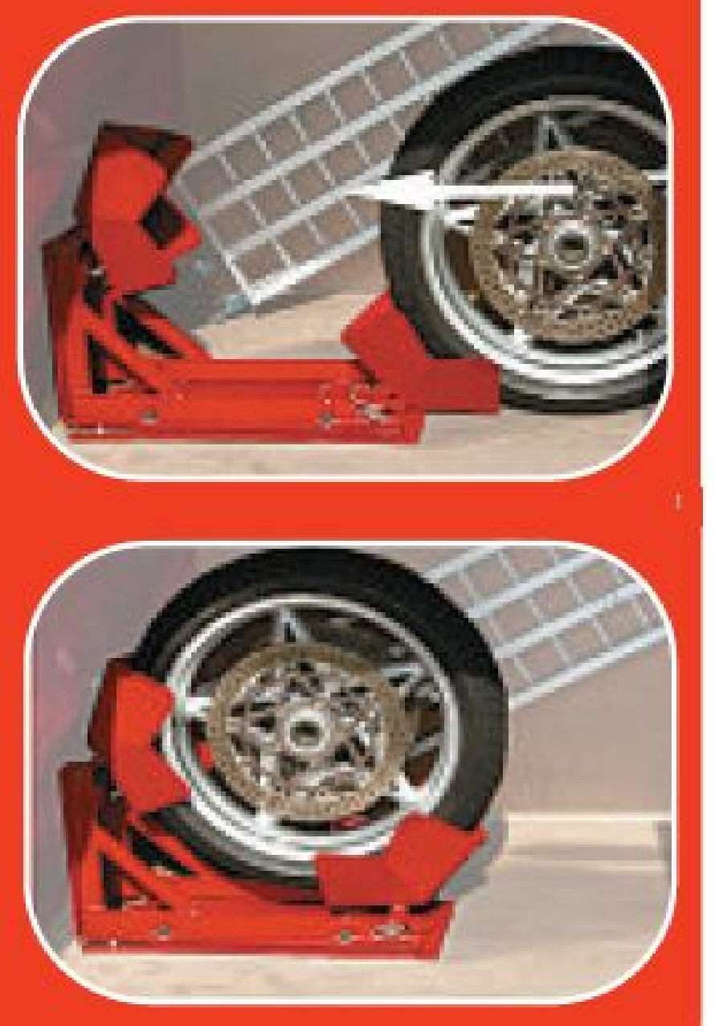

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**TRIUMPH** T120R, 1970, beautiful, starts and rides great, ride away, matching nos, 27,300 miles, California import, owned for 3 years, £6250 ono Tel. 07783 469531 North Yorkshire

**TRIUMPH** Speed Twin, 1959, matching engine & frame numbers, roller-pin headset, 3-phase alternator, solid state reg/rectifier, all LED lights, new Dunlop tyres, £4250 ono Tel. 07564 262292 Cheshire

**TRIUMPH** 5T Speed Twin, pre unit, 1956, easy starter, runs and rides as it should, 12V conversion, new chain, clutch rebuilt, matching numbers, V5C & buff log book, £5750 may p/x Tel. 07876 704268 Norfolk

**TRIUMPH** T110 Tiger, 1959, original Brit bike with slipshift gearbox, original log book, etc, a genuine classic, £6850 no offers Tel. 07447969164 Portsmouth

**TRIUMPH** T100C, 1970, t&t exempt, good original condition, 6113 miles, £7000 Tel. 07469 926203 Yorkshire

**TRIUMPH** Daytona, 1967, matching numbers, powder coated frame, TLS front brake, refurb forks, recent professional top end rebuild + re-bore, requires running in, £4950 Tel. 07887 532507 Sussex

**TRIUMPH** Tiger 90, 350cc, 1967, runs well, professional engine rebuild, original frame and engine number, ex police bike, £5000 ono Tel. 07885 712868 Kent

**YAMAHA** SR500 Street Scrambler, t&t free, 29,000 miles, 1976, owned about 6 years and converted it to a one off street scrambler, £2900 Tel. 01539 536390

## For Sale

**BSA** B18, 1936, 250cc, hand change, runs well, good tyres, V5C, nice condition, £2500 Tel. 01425 618221. Hampshire.

**HONDA** CB500, 2002, my project, running bike, good condition, body panels A1, need small jobs, all electrics A1 working, need rear shock spring, paperwork all ok, need smaller bike, £700 Tel. 02920 883315. Glamorgan.

**MOTO GUZZI** Le-Mans, 1978, very good condition, £9000 Tel. 01278 722614. Somerset.

**PEUGEOT** Expert LWB Auto Van, double wheelchair carrier converted to carry solo motorcycle, driver/passenger and removable jockey seat in rear, MoT and service in November 2024, full length internal ramp and drop ramp, easy to use singlehanded £3500 Tel. 07519 083875. Stevenage.

**SUNBEAM** S8 1950, black, 500cc inline twin, shaft drive, Stewart 12V DC conversion, vgc, some receipts, history & literature, including buff logbook, £5300 ono Tel. 07835 350066. Near Edinburgh.

**TRIUMPH** TR6 Trophy pre-unit, 1961, in superb standard condition and ready to use, low ownership bike with matching numbers, buff logbook, V5C, original registration and Owners Club certificate, maroon and silver with new stainless rims and Avon tyres, can email photos, £7995 Tel. 07960 447592; 01865 762859.

**TRIUMPH** T160 Trident, 1976, rebuilt, immaculate, £9000 Tel. 01278 722614. Somerset.

**YAMAHA** AT2, 125, blue, circa 1973, never road registered, was running but seized up as in a shed around 15 years, slightly disassembled, matching numbers, no mileage as rev counter only, rare example, offers over £500 Tel. Nick 07721 337600. Surrey.

## Parts For Sale

**ARIEL** front valanced mudguard, £120. Triumph pre-unit finned rocker covers complete, £50. John Tickle light brackets, £20. Rear conical hub spindle with adjusters, £15 Tel. 07742 522371. Wiltshire.

**BSA** Gold Star spares, new and used, valve guides, valve springs, 350/500 Gudgeon pins, plus a selection of other bits, various engine pullers, £75 the lot Tel. 01276 932987. Berkshire.

**BSA** A7/A10 assorted parts: rear chrome mudguard stays (hockey stick), £25. Front pair dynamo type engine plates, £20. Gold Star type silencer, excellent, £35. Steering damper original undamaged bakelite type, £12. Original air filter complete and restored, £25. RG Star original pair of mudguards good solid but need rechrome, £75. Top yoke without lock, £25. Pair large round red tank badges excellent £25, will post Tel. 07960 447592.

**BULTACO** Pursang MK4 engine, has been rebuilt with some new parts, £750 ono. Also 250cc Montesa Cappra engine bottom half and gear box, £250 ono Tel. 07815 055629. Scottish Borders.

**GILERA** CX 125cc, full exhaust, brand new old stock, very rare item, £100 ono Tel. 01522 703687. Lincolnshire.

**HONDA** CB900F, 1981, 2 header pipes, very good condition, offers Tel. 01883 348187. Surrey.

**HONDA** CB 72/77, 1967, new r/hand silencer Japanese manufacture, new l/hand silencer pattern part sold as a pair, £400 Tel. 07305 411823. Northants.

**SMITHS** 'D' shaped original speedo 0 to 70mph, probably from Bantam, James or similar small capacity bike, works well on drill but will sell with money back guarantee, £75 plus post Tel. 07960 447592; 01865;762859.

**TRIUMPH** T120/TR6 original Smiths rev counter in excellent condition, sold with money back guarantee, £275 inc post Tel. 079604 47592; 01865 762859.

**TRIUMPH** T120, TR6, T110 etc 8" front brake plate complete with shoes, springs, operating arm, this fits the FWH type wheel from 1958, polished and in excellent condition, will post, £80 Tel. 07960 447592; 01865 762859.

**TRIUMPH** pre-unit (finned type) Rocker covers complete, £50. John Tickle headlight brackets, 35mm, £20, 19" stainless mudguard, new, £40. Stainless steel number plate holder, £45 Tel. 07742 522371. Wiltshire.

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**GAG BIKE** wanted, instant cash paid for 50cc or 80cc any make, top price paid, top condition preferred Tel. 01522 703687. Lincolnshire.

**NORTON** P11/N15/G15CS parts wanted: engine parts, frame wheels forks etc, anything considered, inc complete/incomplete non runner Tel. 01305 826670. Dorset.

**TRIUMPH** Rigid sprung hub, 6T want front end complete, even over length chopper front for rebuild of bike Tel. Steve 07396 270365. Brighton.

**TRIUMPH** Tiger Cub T20, 1959-60, wanted, upto £2000 Tel. 07717 338587. Staffs.

## Miscellaneous

**BOOK** 'The soft science of road racing motorcycles' by Keith Code, soft back in good condition, from 1986, £10 can post Tel. 07852 921265.

**CLASSIC** Bike magazine, 2006 to 2024, 19 years, 5 copies missing, 223 copies. Classic Bike Guide magazine 2006-2024, 19 years, 3 copies missing, 225 copies. The Classic MotorCycle magazine, 2010 to 2024, 15 years, 1 copy missing, 179 copies. Real Classic magazine, 2012 to 2024, 13 years, complete, 156 copies. Plus 36 classic motorcycle magazines, 817 in total, possibly suit trader, £80 cash on collection Tel. 01246 604676. Derbyshire.

**CLYMER** for BMW Airheads R series, 1970 to 1994 including GS, a massive book 775 pages, £25. Haynes for Honda Deauville 06 to '13, Transalp 08 to '13, £12, both used but good. Heyco pliers from my old R65 toolkit may suit others, £8, can post Tel. 07852 921265.

**HAYNES** for CB100N/CB125N, MT50/MB50, SL125, CB100/125S, £10 each. Factory Suzuki manual for A100, AS100, £12 Tel. 07852 921265. .

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**MAGAZINES** over 500 bike magazines, Classic Bike, Motorcycle Mechanics, Classic Bike, and others, four big heavy bags, from early 1960s £100 Tel. 07511 619810. Glasgow.

**MOTOCOURSE** 1980-81, excellent condition, £30. Motomondiale, 1979, very good condition, large format Italian text, great pictures, £10. 48 no Racer Track Tests from 1960, pages from MCN in folder, £10 Tel. 01276 932987. Berkshire.

**STAINLESS** 60s/70s steel number plate back light holder, £45. Triumph Rocker boxes finned type complete, £45. Wanted Triumph big bore swept backs, Manx 5 gallon alloy tank Tel. 07742 522371. Wiltshire.

**VARIOUS** new books, mostly hardback, Triumph MV Agusta, Matchless, Vincent, Velocette, Kawasaki W650, Yamaha XT500, etc contact for details Tel. 01883 348187. Surrey.

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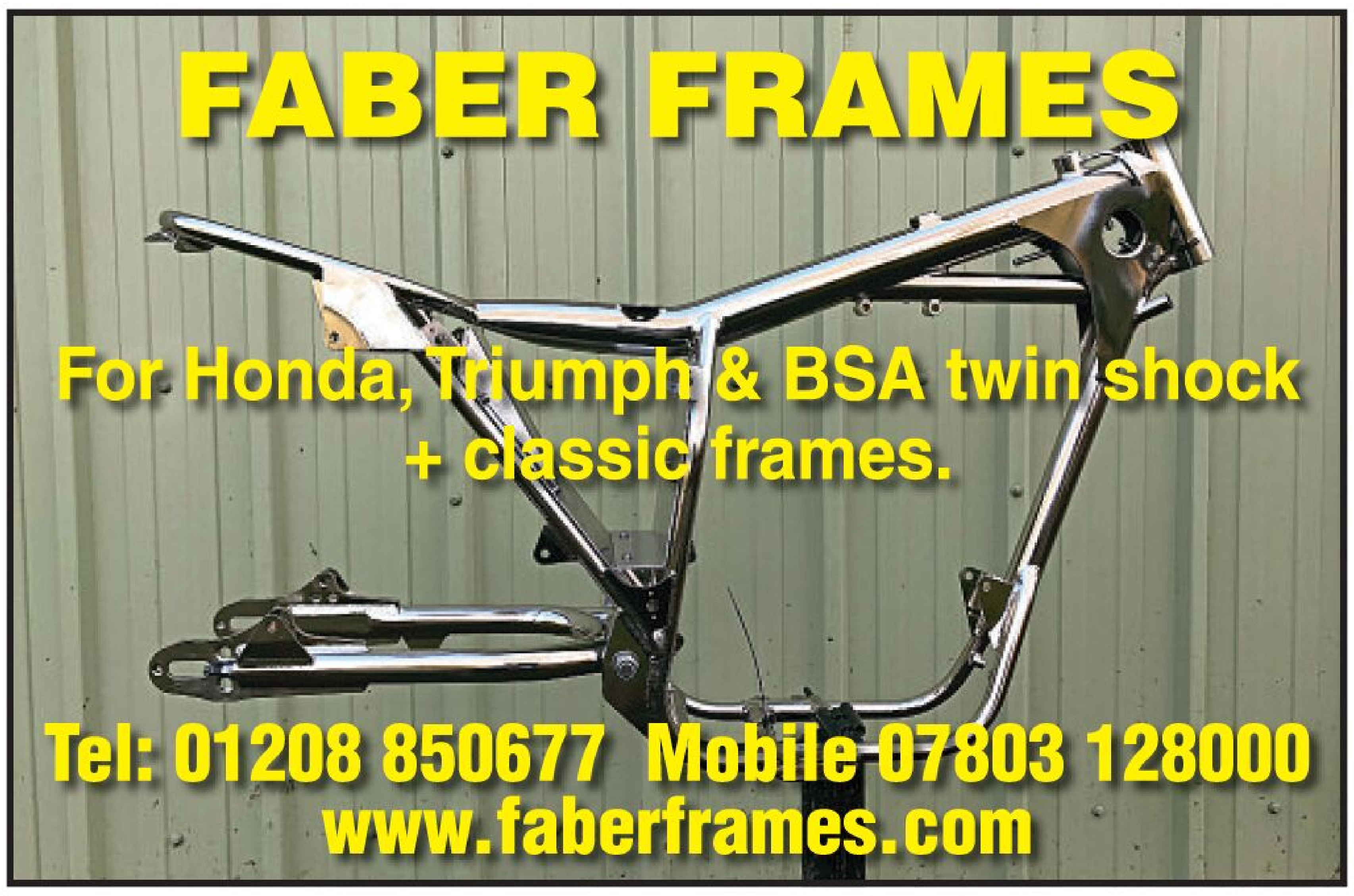
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# Things what we've been up to...

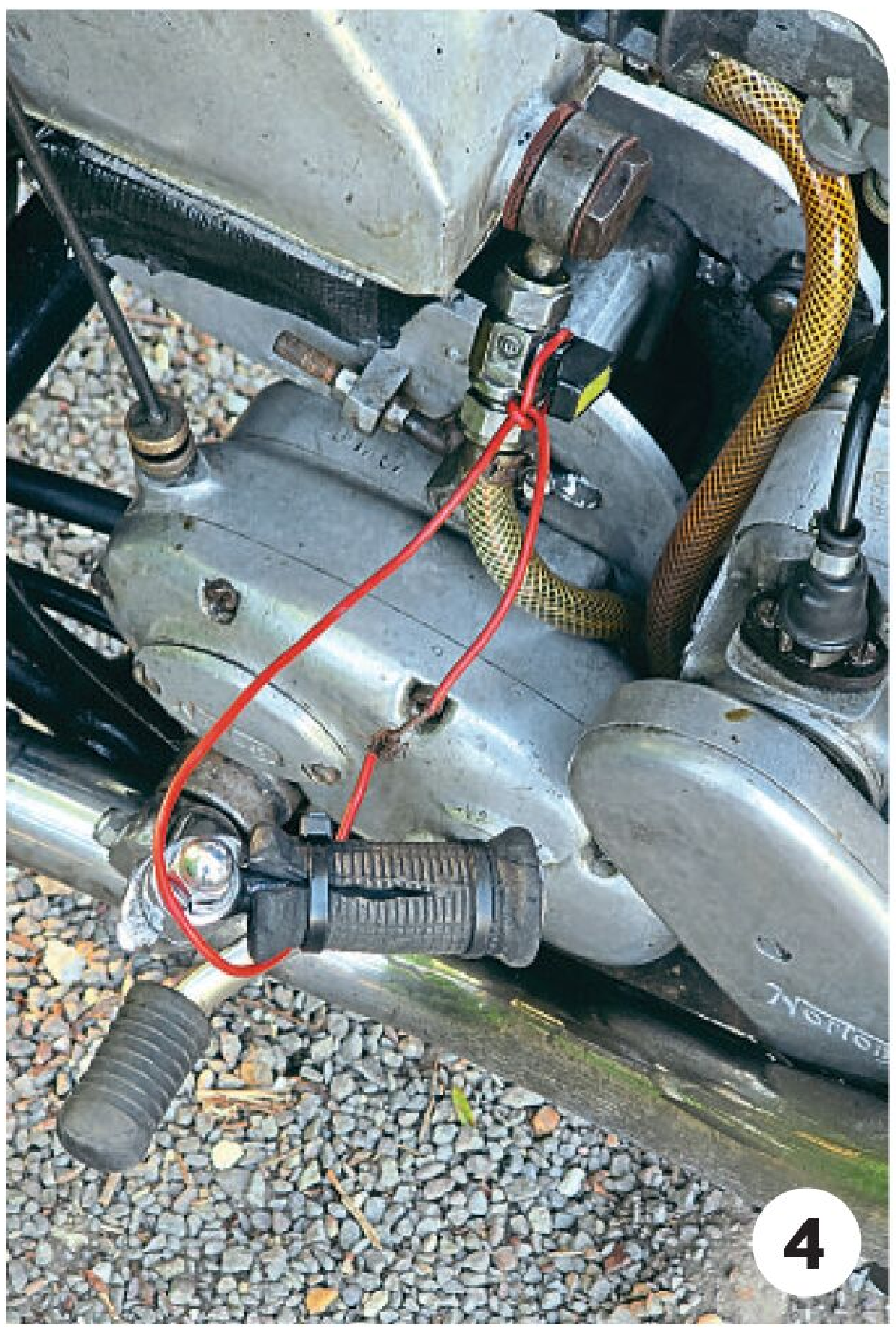
Though time in the workshop has been limited, **Matt** certainly hasn't been idle... he's had plenty to keep him occupied!

AS THE YEAR SPICES UP WITH shows and riding weather, work has just got even busier, with our company, Mortons, being bought by Kelsey Media. There's been all sorts of meetings and talks about their future and ours, but we trust *CBG* is in safe hands, and that the company may even look at an increased online presence and perhaps more shows, too. Let's see!

**Picture 1:** Consequently, workshop time has been limited. The BMW R100RS needed a new rear tyre, and the old Continental came off. I'll admit, I wasn't that convinced of the Conti's handling manners, nor of its wear rate, especially for the cost – but it does look appropriate. In its place is now a Mitas H06, a pattern similar to TT100s, which is leaps and bounds better in cornering on the heavy BM. It's also much, much easier to fit, thanks to the thinner/softer sidewalls – so much that I didn't nick the inner tube with the levers this time!

**Picture 2 + 3:** A lovely man has bought the BSA B31 from me. John is patiently waiting for me to finish all the problems you just learn to live around on a bike you've had for years, like the alloy mudguards wearing and cracking, lights that didn't work (check these awesome copies of the 'raygun' Wipac lights from the Bantam from Classic Bike Spares), a battery too large for the Lucas replica battery box and a throttle that was held on with gaffer tape! I hope John enjoys this wonderful bike as much as I have.

2



4

3

**Picture 4:** Here's the simplest solution to remember to turn on your oil tap. A loop of bright red wire around the tap and the kick-start – don't turn it on and you can't start the bike! I've a dreadful memory and have not been looking forward to deciding on what to fit on the ES2 or the Commando. Now I know.

**Picture 5:** Just a quickie – don't know who it belongs to, but this gorgeous bike was seen at our local village car and bike show at Bradenham recently. It's a Moto Guzzi T3 California, is my favourite model, and must have the comfiest seat ever to grace a motorcycle. What a machine! CBG

MOTO GUZZI
850-T3
CALIFORNIA

5

Melting solder into the fitting

# Making cables

Why should you make your own cables when most are easy to get and affordable for many bikes? Because if you've an unusual bike or have modified the handlebars, you may need some bespoke ones. We show you how to make your own...

**Words and photos by** Matt, making the cables thanks to Venhill Cables – venhill.co.uk

BUYING CABLES IS EASY AND cheap – for most bikes. But if you've an unusual model, an older or rare machine, or have modified a part, you may need bespoke cables. And how many classics are standard?

A good friend needed this – he has got a rather uncomfortable hernia that has meant some taller handlebars on his Royal Enfield 500 Bullet. This should get him feeling happy while riding again. At the same time, he's fitted an AMAL carb from Hitchcocks motorcycles, purveyors of fine Enfield things, to make the single-cylinder a little quicker, but that needs a separate choke control, adding to the cables!

Measure twice, cut once

So, our list is a front brake, decompressor, choke, throttle and clutch cables which need making, and all unique lengths, with the throttle cable needing a new AMAL end.

Keep in mind the difference between inners and outers

These can be made by companies such as Venhill (venhill.co.uk), but we decided to have a go ourselves.

Adjuster needs to go on before both ends

Fittings come in all different shapes and sizes

Cutting outer

Ferrules available

Essential to get right one for feel

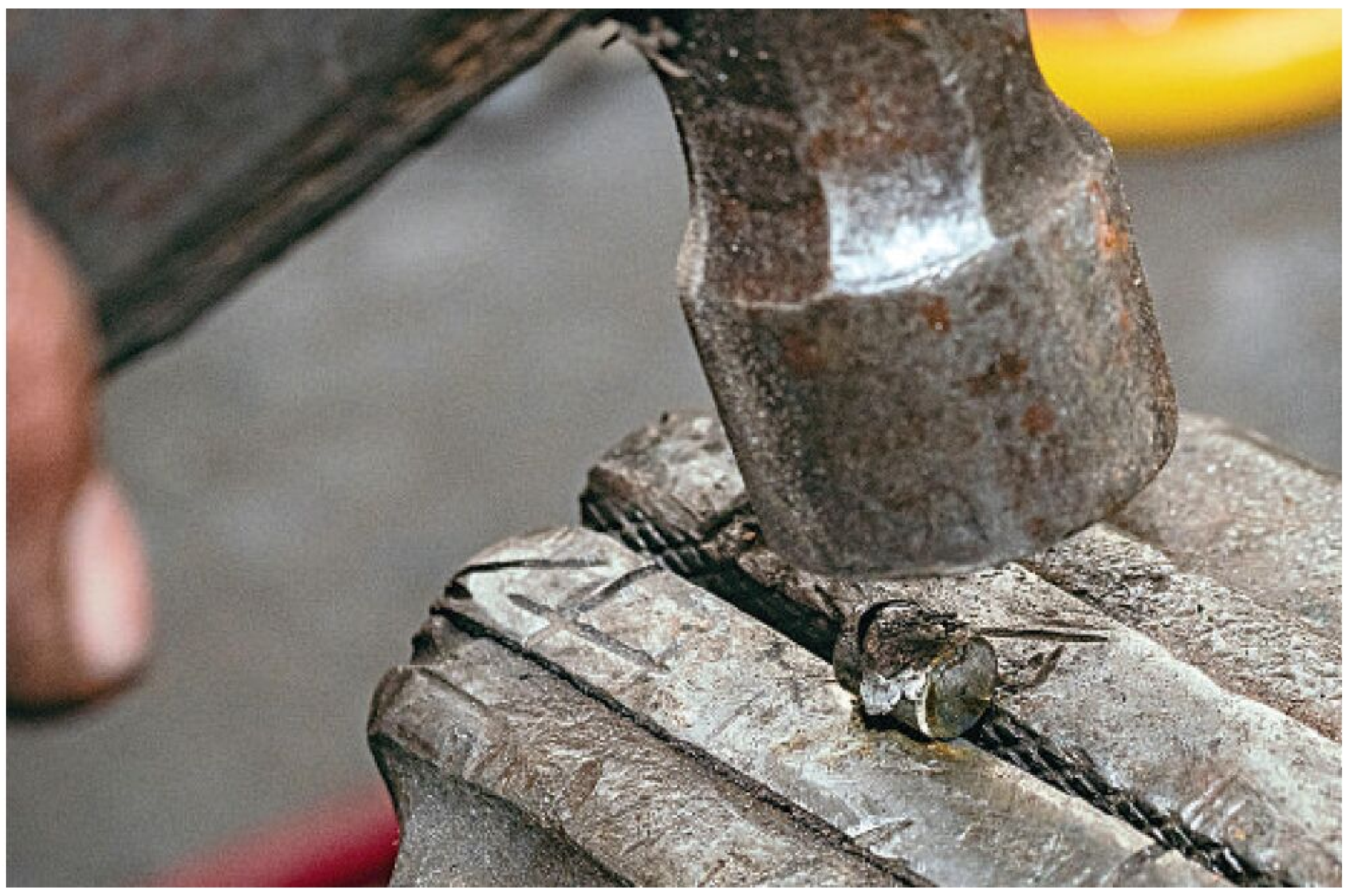
I had a Venhill workshop kit from years ago that included a wide range of different inner and outer cables, end fittings, adjusters, rubber sleeves and metal ferrules I'd barely used. It had much of what we needed – and could some be reshaped? You don't need this, but it meant we had options.

After getting the handlebars in the right position, we fitted the controls back onto the brake, or clutch, or carb, and routed them to the controls. This gave us a measurement that was needed to be added to the existing standard cable. Then, crucially, we measured them again, reaching the figure of an extra six inches on top of standard. Don't forget to allow for wide bends of cables and steering and suspension movement.

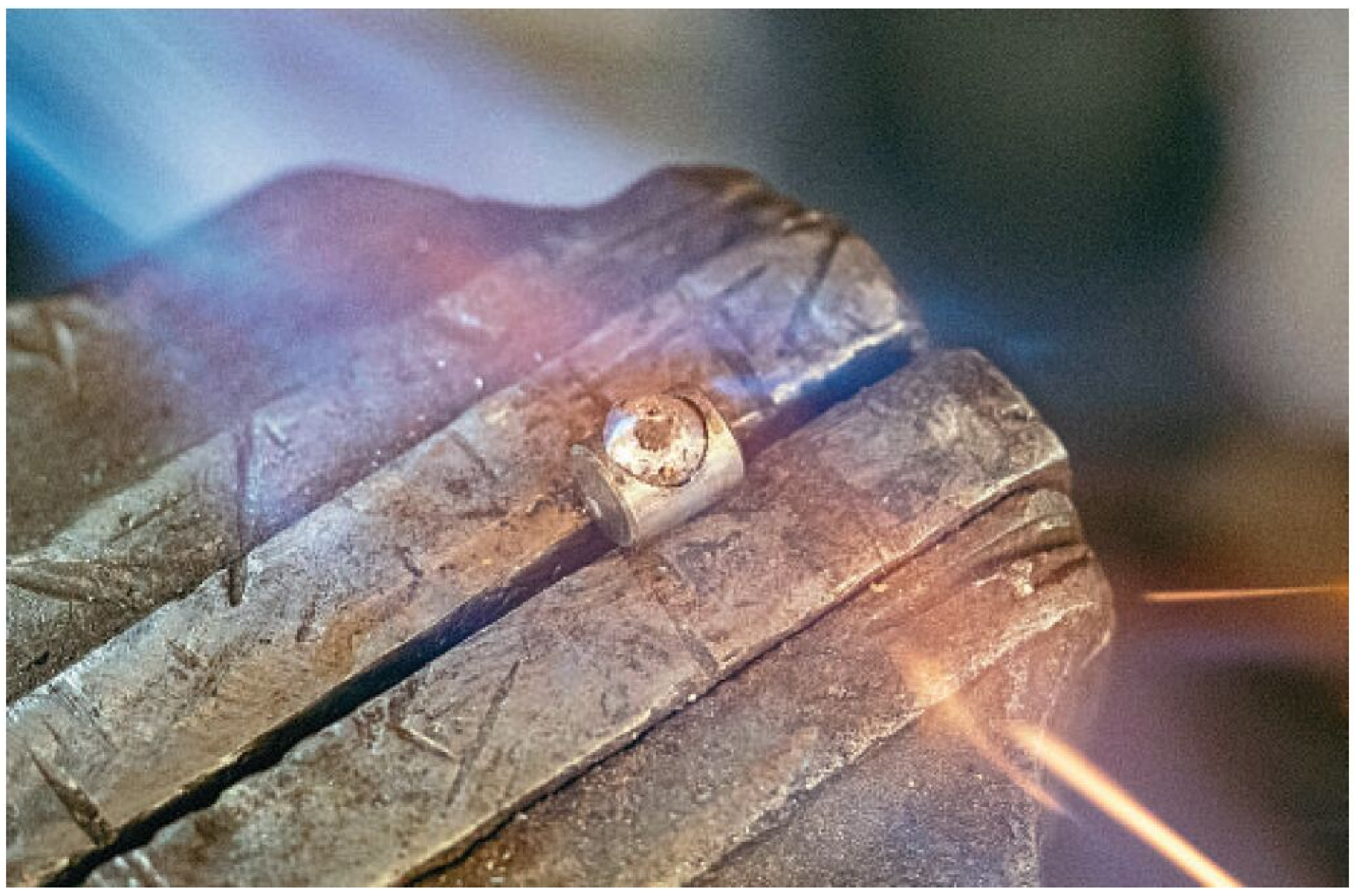
Another measurement is the difference between the length of the cable and the sleeve. If this difference is too little, you won't get the cable pull you need; too much and it won't fit. The

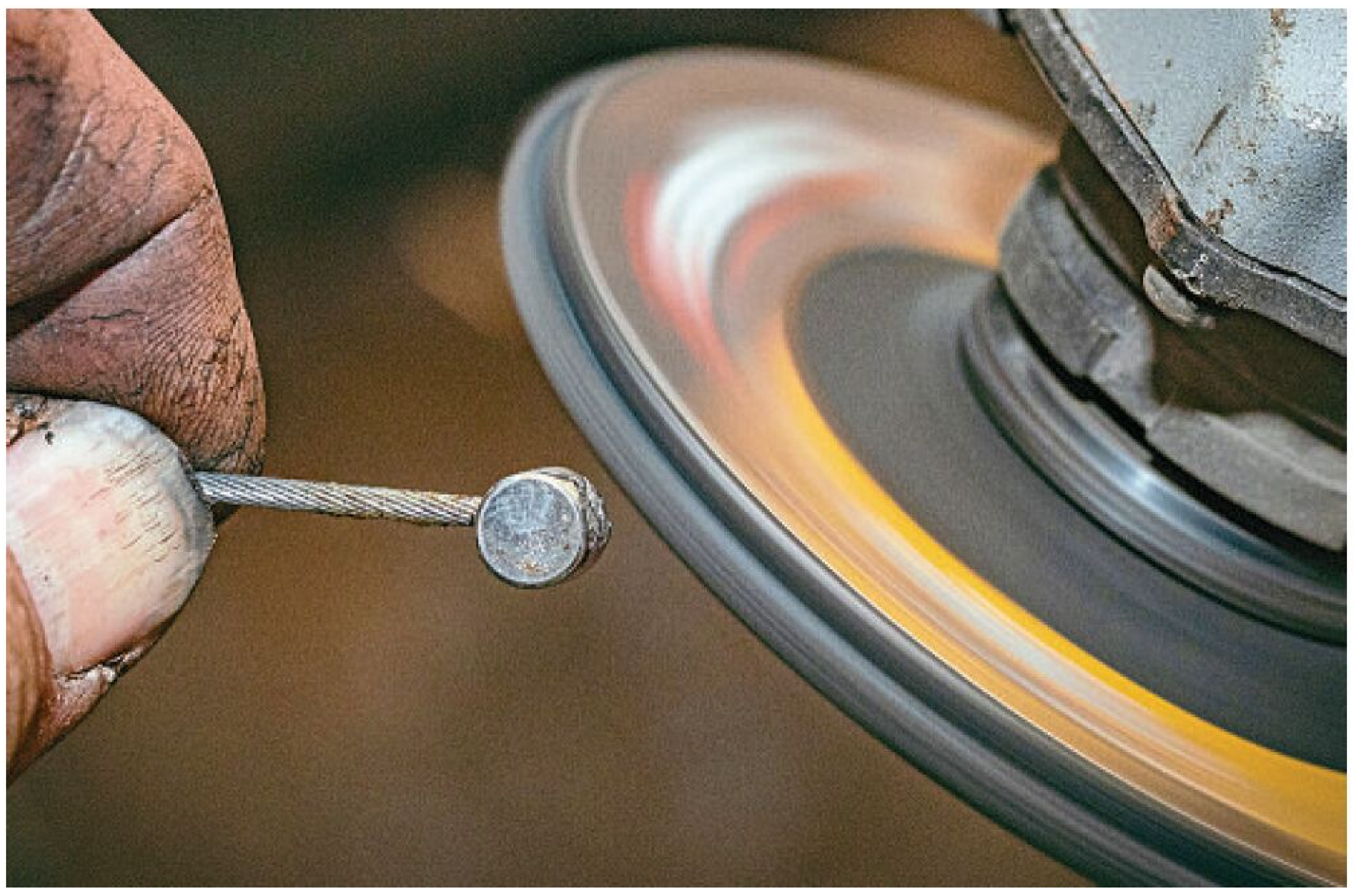
## What do you need?

- Outer sleeve with lining (the correct width)
- Inner cables: braided, galvanized or stainless steel
- Correct end fittings
- Cable cutters or Dremmel with disc
- Adjusters if needed
- Ferrules for end of sleeves
- Heatproof protection (if needed)
- Rubber caps
- Flux
- Solder
- Blow torch
- Tape measure


Splaying out cable

Galvanised can use normal flux and solder


Heat it up; vice helps as heat sink


Clean up – but use gloves!

measurement won't be different if the cable is to be shorter or longer, so pull the end to one end and get the difference.

Next, we got the old cables to see what fittings were needed; for example, the front brake has much larger fittings than the tiny ends of the AMAL carb slide or the clutch. We had most in our kit, so we tried them in the levers, and one needed a little filing. We also had to bear in mind the adjuster in the clutch cable and where it would be on a straight run of the cable.

Use cable cutters or a Dremmel with a cutting disc to cut the cable and sleeve. The sleeve is metal inside, so even with proper pliers it may need a file to smarten up. I put some Blu Tack down the hole to stop any filings heading down the nice Teflon inner – or do it upside-down!

Next, match up the ferrules with the standard cable. Some come off the original and can be used again, and the same with the adjusters.

Now to fit the first fitting to one end of the cable. Pop the fitting on with the larger hole at the end, then let it fall down out of the way and 'bird cage' the end of the strands of the cable. You can use a lovely punch and die kit to create a perfect shape, or you can put the cable in a vice sticking up about 5mm and splay them out with a hammer, like a flower head. Either way, the idea is for the wider area of the cable to have more anchorage in the fitting's hole, and then the solder hold it nicely in place so it cannot pull through the hole.

Clean all the parts to be put together with brake cleaner to remove grease or oil, then get some flux and paint it onto the area you wish the solder to stick to, so the hole in the fitting and the splayed cable.

There are several ways to solder the cable, and the best way is using a solder pot. This is a pot of molten solder you dip the cable, with the fitting in the correct place, into. The molten solder gets right in all the nooks and crannies. The way to do this if you don't have a pot is to use a blow torch and melt the wire of solder into the hole you wish to fill. The fitting and cable must be hot for the solder to stick, but because the cable is held in the vice it acts as a heat sink, so the cable doesn't get too hot, making it brittle. Still, be aware of how much heat you are using. And soldering irons are safer in this respect but take forever and don't get the solder hot enough for it to get deep in there.

Once cooled, if the end is slightly raised, you can easily file down the bump. Now make sure before you do the other end that everything you need is on the cable. Adjusters, rubber ends, ferrules – once both ends are on, it's too late!

Hopefully, now you should have made your control cable. Fit it up, and if you measured carefully, it should be a doddle. Keep an eye on it for the first few uses. And unlike me when making these, use gloves when grinding! CBG

## Stainless steel or galvanized?

You can get stainless steel or galvanized cable. Stainless sounds better but requires a special flux and a rather nasty solder which has lead in. Galvanised lasts just as long, but you can put it together with plumber's or electrician's flux and solder.

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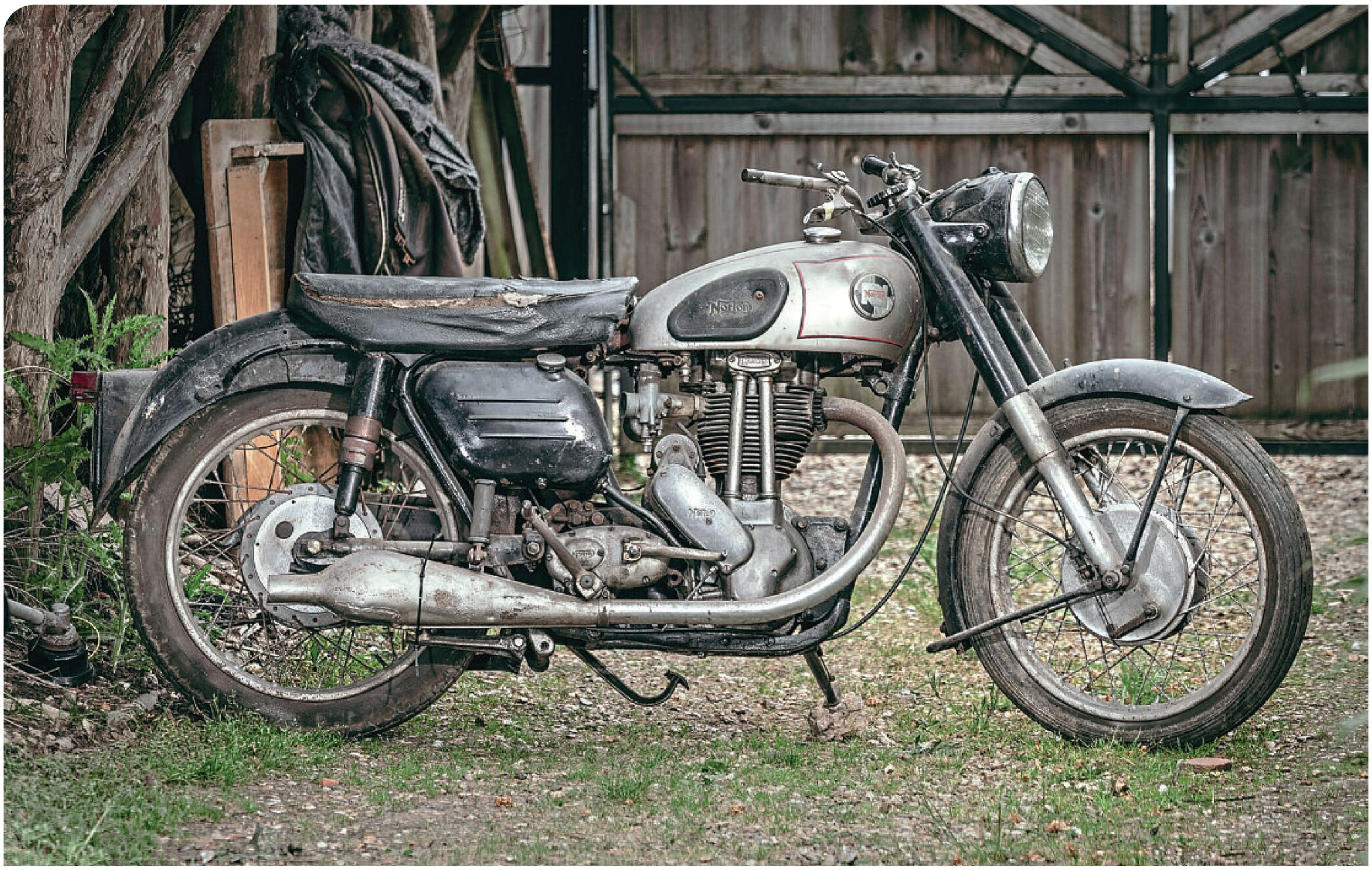


# Barn find! Norton Model 50

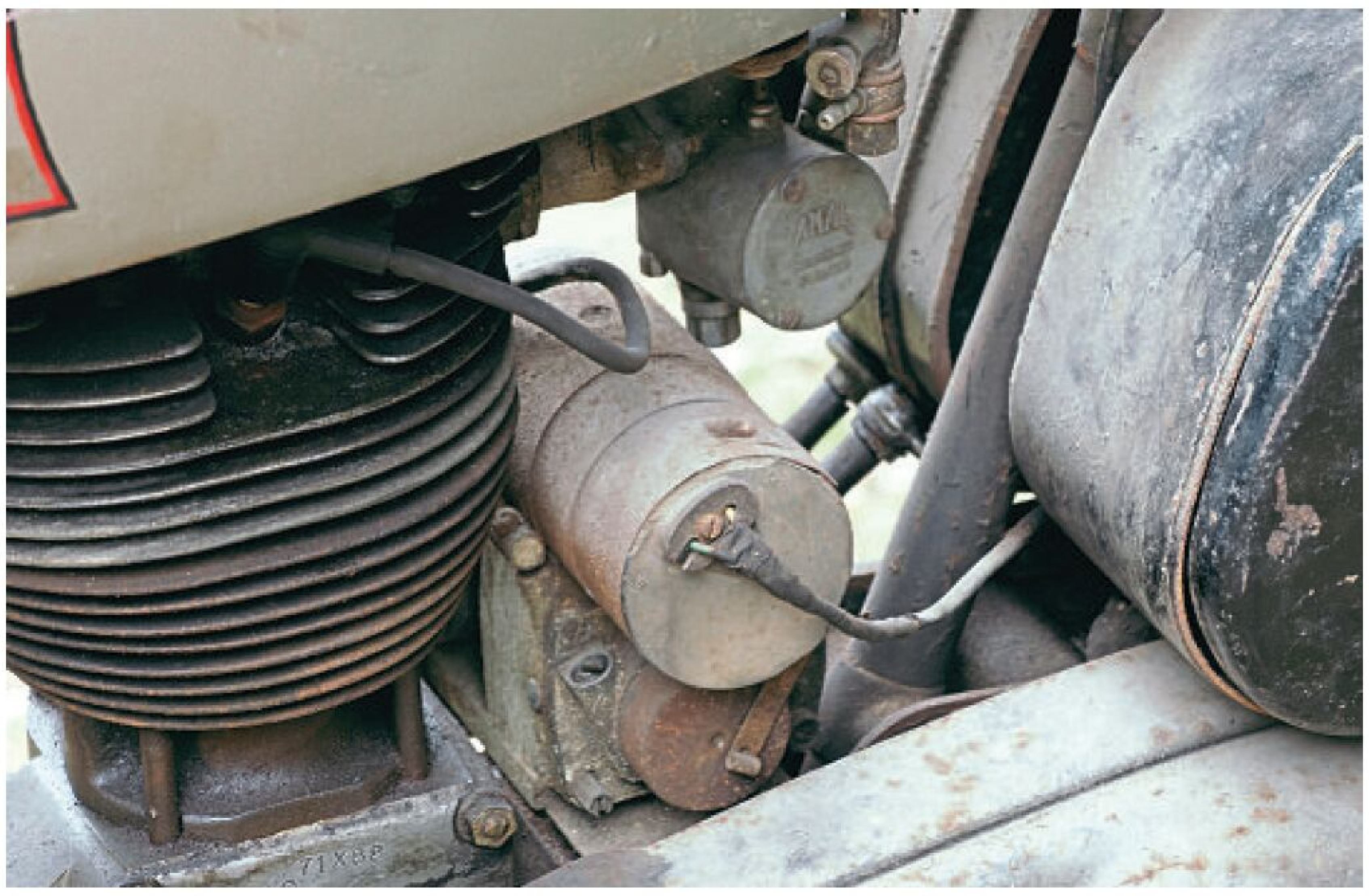
Found on a sale website, this 350cc single is a real time warp

**Words and photography by** Matt, with great thanks to Matt Marsham

**MANY OF US ARE CRITICAL OF THE** recent trend for barn finds. I never knew there were that many barns – and I live in bloody Norfolk! Someone somewhere is making a mint selling spray-on dust and bird poop, I feel…

But my good friend Matt, who is always scouring Facebook Marketplace, eBay, Gumtree and all the other collection points for old crap, saw this Norton and instantly made contact. A little haggle later and it was on the way to his workshop.

What's it like? This 1957 example has sat for many years, this is clear. But it is also remarkably intact, with nothing missing ➡



– that we can see so far – apart from the footrests, twist grip, rear brake spring and the Prince of Darkness badge on the nacelle.

There is still much to do, however, but first, a plan. Should it be kept as it is, looking lived in, like so many 350 cooking model bikes? Or should it be spruced up with new paint? Or even painted and polished to within an inch of its life?

Matt said he's going to let the bike tell him. "It all depends what we find. If the engine has to come apart or the tank is rusty, then it'll look silly with a sorted tank and everything else filthy."

So, where is the starting point? Whether the solution is an oily rag look or as new, the Model 50 needs new tyres. The front is bald! An Avon SM pair are getting on for £200, but TT100-lookalike Mitas H-06 are just over £100, and add £30 for tubes and tape. The rims look

rusty and have been painted but should be solid and spokes look fine. To go shiny will be about £190 per wheel for rims, stainless spokes and nipples, but we can build them, thankfully. And Matt has a blast cabinet, so the rim may as well be cleaned up if we've already gone that far. Brake linings will hopefully be okay, as older linings work better (just wear a mask if playing with them). If knackered, a new set is £48.

The forks look like they may just need a clean and fork seal, though that may be because there's no oil in them! Headraces feel fine and all levers bar the throttle are present. Someone has been in the headlamp nacelle, but a complete wiring loom is £70, a bargain to irradicate electrical gremlins if needed. Next!

The tank looks scruffy with its hand-painted scheme and knocks and dents but inside looks passable. Indian ones are £250 if needed, though. Fuel pipes are on Matt's shelf, we can make cables, taps are rebuildable, and if the carb doesn't clean up, it's £300 for a shiny new one.

The big question is if the magneto has any fire in its belly, so Matt wants to pop a new plug in, connect a fuel tank, top up the oil tank – yes, it has oil in it – and kick it over. Some will wince at that, while others see it as the obvious ➡

> ***"The big question is if the magneto has any fire in its belly, so Matt wants to pop a new plug in, connect a fuel tank, top up the oil tank - yes, it has oil in it - and kick it over."***

Norton
Norton

way of answering the question of 'how is the engine?'

The gearbox gives an issue. It is stuck in second, we think, so the kick-start and gear lever have to come off for the side casing to be removed. Matt's convinced it is the pawl stuck with gummy, gooey oil and lack of use – it makes sense, as even when new the M50 made a not-so-startling 17bhp, which shouldn't have troubled the 'box.

Oil tank has oil in it and a Saturday afternoon brush paintjob like the rest of the bike, while the rest of the chassis, engine plates and gearbox adjusters look like they've never been touched. It's all a good sign. But why was it parked up?

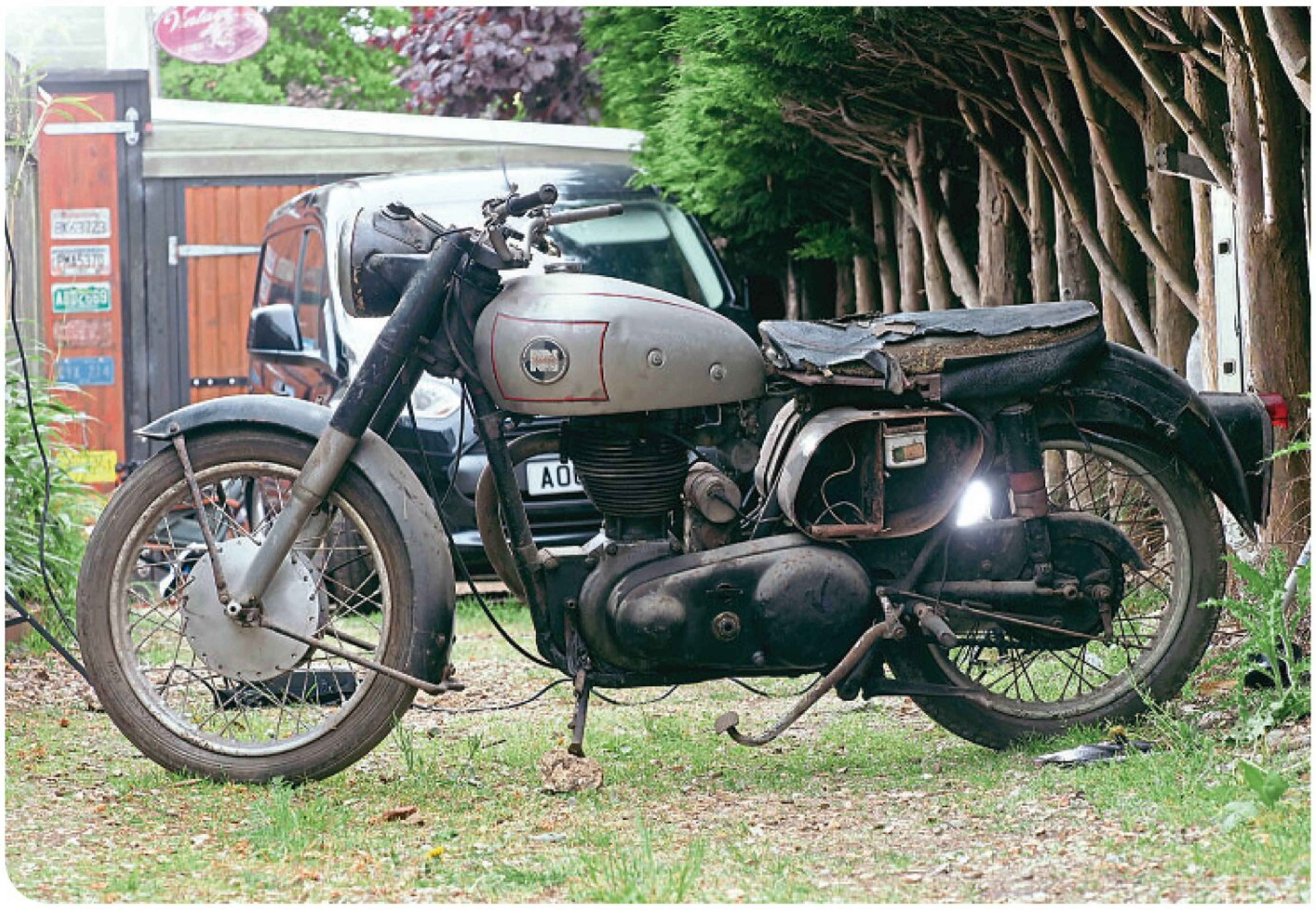
The exhaust silencer has been welded up at the bottom, but the alloy centrestand is present, though not its retaining spring, hence the cable tie! There's a sidestand too, which I may nick for my ES2 when Matt's not looking…

The rear tinware has a few splits in it, but nothing a quick zip with a welder can't fix. We've no idea about the rear shocks, but less than £100 will get you a new budget pair, and you may have noticed the seat – it could do with a little sprucing up. Matt thinks it "just needs a bit of new foam," but the base needs welding a new panel in the front and anyway, £150 will get you a cheap new one.

Who knows what else? Some electrics are missing from the toolbox, and we haven't looked in the primary case yet, but there is no reason that, other than adjustment and lubrication, it should need much.

This Model 50 has lived a life. It's got repairs here, dings there, tired areas, and parts of it that haven't been touched – ever. How it gets finished is down to Matt, but I suspect it will have the gearbox sorted to find neutral, petrol and oil added to see if it starts, a damn good steam clean… and then see what it looks like. While parts are not cheap, we are really lucky you can still get them for this near 70-year-old bike, and it shouldn't need too much. But then, it's not worth that much. Does this all sound familiar to you?

Next month, we'll have the gearbox woes diagnosed and fixed – and hopefully see if we can breathe some life into it. Wish us luck! CBG



## What is a Model 50?

The Model 50 started life in 1933 as a smaller sibling to the ES2 and Model 18. It lasted until the war, when Norton turned its attention to sidevalve bikes for the military, and it was introduced again in 1955.

Yet again, the 50 used the ES2 frame, tank, and most other parts, similar to the larger 596cc 19S. With no less weight than the 500cc ES2, the 350 was a hefty machine, but still peppy, with a 7.3:1 compression ratio, and come 1957 it got new cams and cylinder head to sit in the swinging arm frame. The year 1959 saw an alternator fitted with a coil to fire the spark and the Featherbed frame allied to the Roadholder short forks, with a few other changes until the 50 was retired in 1963.

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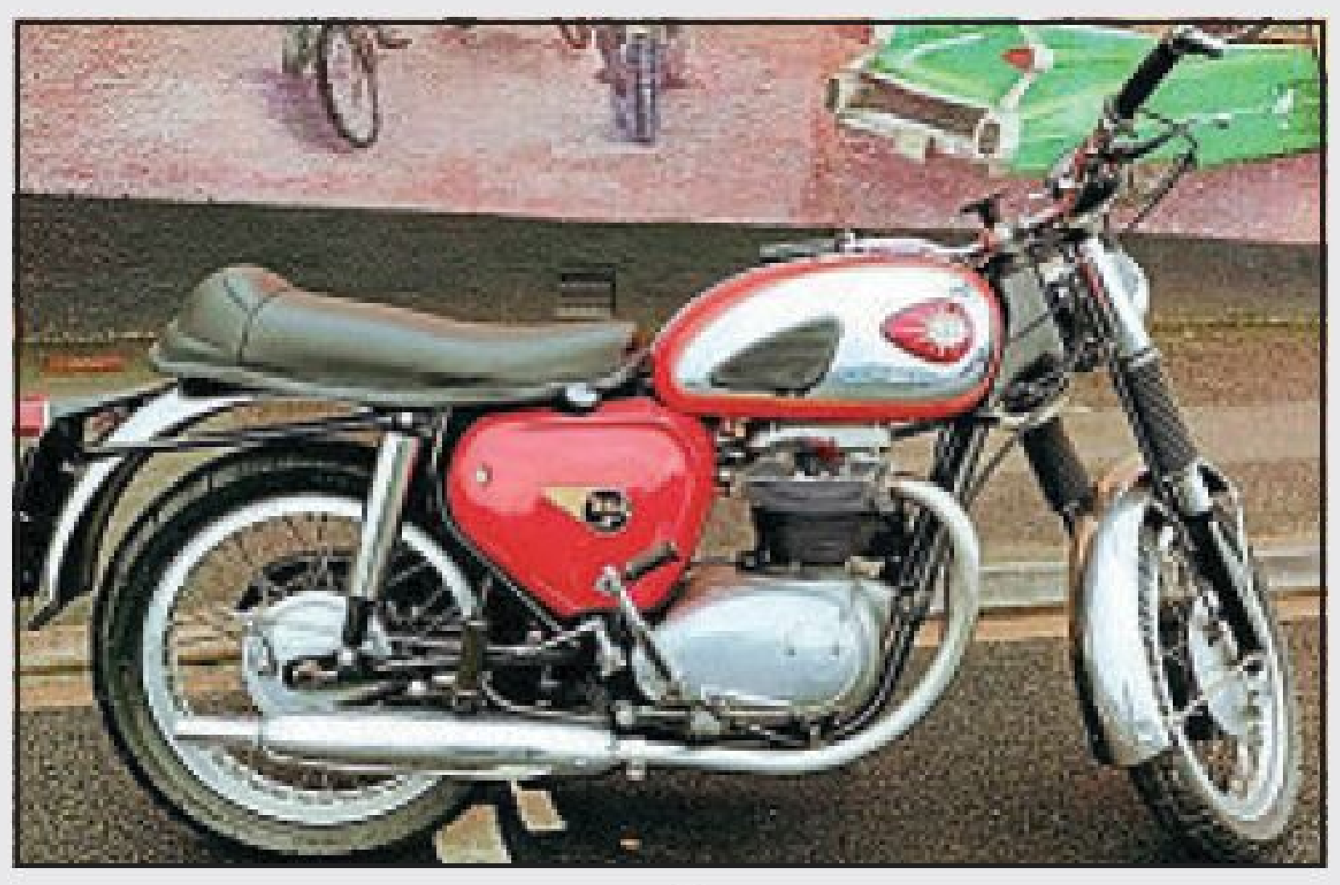
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**Who do they think they are?**

**Frank Westworth** is the editor of RealClassic magazine, the latest in a long series of publications that began in 1982 when he was bullied into producing *The Jampot*, the previously excellent magazine of the AJS & Matchless OC. He was also founding editor of *Classic Bike Guide* and has returned as a columnist as a penance. Or something. He has a mysterious obsession with riding obscure and elderly motorcycles, which he does very slowly…

# Frank's Famous Last Words

Frank's been considering Royal Enfields – modern ones. This is unusual, somehow…

CONSIDER THE SCENE. IT WAS A RAINY day, but I had a need to be elsewhere. Getting into and indeed out of the West Country can be a considerable and tedious challenge in the less chilly and wet months, so two wheels were my only option. I may dislike filtering, but needs must, as politicians are prone to pretending, so I took my mostly modern bike, for all the usual reasons. Indolence is high on my personal list here.

On the way north, having negotiated the vast underwater carpark which pretends to be the M5 south of Bristol (I can't figure out a route into Wales which avoids this), I pulled into the first fuel stop-cum-lunchtime-eatery to replenish man and motorcycle. It was raining. My nearly-new and enormously expensive top-quality jacket had let so much water through its miraculous membranes that even the armoured pants beneath my waterproofs were soaked. Creative invective is its own reward.

The eatery car park – I'll not publicise it because they serve nothing healthy and I am a great supporter of (other people) eating healthily – was packed with bikes. Impressive, given the inclemency of the climes. But I was in Wales, where they take deluges and similar disasters in their stride. Time to look at some bikes. I can always make time to look at bikes. I'm always looking for a 1971 Triumph T100C with a label offering it for sale for £100, for example.

It was an old bike club's big run, apparently, and indeed there were quite a few old bikes. But there were more Royal Enfields. Modern Indian RE singles and twins outnumbered both the oldsters and the rest of the newsters. This is a trend, and an increasing feature of the events I accidentally attend – as in this case. I chatted with a person who recognised me somehow and was a great fan of all things AJS and Matchless, as indeed am I, and we fell to considering how this modernistic miracle had happened. He'd noticed it too. Instead of rorting heroically around aboard a thudding G80 or a thundering CSR twin, more and more riders were turning up on nice, shiny, new Royal Enfield machines.

Please don't read anything judgemental here. I was riding an American machine, not my glorious T120V Bonneville. I was just both surprised and impressed that RE was so obviously and effectively ruling the old-bike roost – with modern machines. If I'd expected anything – which I'd not, really – I might have been unsurprised to stumble over a high proportion of modern Triumphs; the new-ish 400cc singles are very impressive, light, quick, and flickable as anything. And quite powerful, which must be a good thing, given that Wales is rightly famous for its considerable hills. But no. Many more Meteors than Speed 400s, and a lot more Interceptors than Street Twins. As I say, impressive.

My chatting companion wondered whether RE's success was killing off interest in riding old bikes. I had to be noncommittal, of course, but could certainly see his point. If we stop to consider this, a modern RE makes much sense, certainly in the self-starting stakes, and in the serious stoppers stakes too. But… they're pretty slow, surely? Surely a rider used to, say, the 26 or so horses kicked out by a decent Matchless G80 would consider the Meteor's 20 youthful ponies to be a little on the feeble side? Admittedly, the AMC anchors are not up to a modern ABS system, but even so…

But the question here was whether the ubiquity and capability of the current breed of Royal Enfields was killing interest in old bikes. We tottered together around the dripping machinery, listening to cheery grumbles about the weather, and observed that while the majority of machinery was modern, the bikes with the concentrated clusters of riders surrounding them were the old ones. A decent selection, too. Maybe, I thought, the next time a similar event was held, more of the old bike fans would tackle them on their old bikes – especially if the rain held off.

We shared a coffee, my anonymous friend and I, then I togged up, filled up, and headed out northwards. My friend appeared as I made final vain attempts at waterproofing my waterproofs. His Meteor looked and sounded very well.

And as we headed off in our separate directions, I wondered whether in fact we should be delighted that the REs are doing so well. And surely, the ultimate recognition of their achievement lies in Honda launching its own RE clone, the CB350 single, which could easily be mistaken for an RE on a drizzly day. Another 20bhp single with all modern trimmings for just under four grand. Who could ask for more? CBG

> *"He'd noticed it too. Instead of rorting heroically around aboard a thudding G80 or a thundering CSR twin, more and more riders were turning up on nice, shiny, new Royal Enfield machines."*

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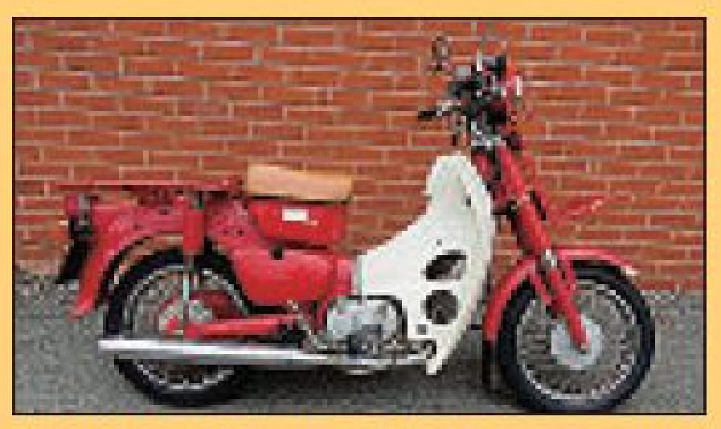
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